clean guts & sacrificed hares

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clean guts & sacrificed hares

by indigocarnation

Summary

Will goes into heat during a crime scene, which makes Jack Crawford insist that he goes through a psychiatric evaluation again. The one responsible for it is the ever-enigmatic and charming Dr. Hannibal Lecter, an alpha who goes out of his way to ease Will's worries and, well, court him.

Notes

Hello, everyone! This fic is a work in progress and it was inspired by a prompt Batty gave me, a little omegaverse courting AU that developed into a lot more.

If everything goes according to plan, I'll be posting chapters weekly. I'll be adding new tags as the chapters are posted, of course.

Please, as always, read the tags carefully before reading it. I hope you enjoy it!

I fully authorize translations, remixes, podfics adaptations or fanarts of all of my works, as long as I’m rightfully credited and that the original work is linked. I kindly ask you to send me the link via Twitter or Tumblr.

Murmur of Dawn

The somber, slate-gray sky wept gently while Will nestled in the cozy embrace of his favorite wool blanket. He was sitting in his kitchen, brewing coffee, as he struggled to keep his tired eyes open. The fragrant delicacy of the roasted beans filled the air and enveloped his senses in a comforting lull. He stared at the windowpane, where the thick rain was pattering, and focused on the dancing of the raindrops. Wolf Trap was its own kind of dreamscape solace.

His dogs were coiled up against each other in the living room, too cold to move. It certainly didn't help that most of them were elderly, and the weather hurt their fragile, worn-out bones. Will served them their food, changed their water and scratched each of their little heads before he got ready for work.

It was easier if he didn't think about it. About how he had failed his psychiatric evaluation and couldn't join the FBI as an actual special agent like his peers did. Word got out fast and Will noticed that most of them distanced themselves from him. Not thinking about it wasn't easy, though. A rebellious part of Will thought he deserved better than to live under Jack Crawford's heavy thumb all his life. And, of course, things had only been worse since *the incident*.

He picked out a navy blue jacket, one of the thickest he had, and a pair of black tailored pants. Because it had been raining a lot lately, his only umbrella had been damaged by wind blowing the previous week.

The drive to the Bureau was smoother than Will was anticipating, and he soon arrived there. Unable to contain a yawn, he also felt his stomach grumble as a cruel reminder that he hadn't had anything to eat.

"Good morning, Will. You look like hell," was the first thing Beverly Katz said to him.

Will slightly shrugged, highly-aware of the pent-up tension in his shoulders. "I feel like it. Catch me up to speed."

Beverly went on and on about updates on the cases they were looking into—dirt under the nails of a severed hand, new suspicions of possible motivations for four related toddler murders, a surfer whose head had been impaled on his board.

Will nodded along as he tried to prepare himself for the heavy workload the week had reserved for him.

"And by the way, we're all being forced to go through psych eval again," Beverly said.

"No way. Why?"

She sighed. "Well, after what happened last month, can you even blame Jack for wanting to protect you? People can be vile, Will. He's just looking out for you."

Will knew that everyone at the Bureau would have their eyes on him, and that the incident was plastered onto their brains.

Will remembered how the tableau made him go into heat almost immediately—he couldn't rid himself of the feeling of dry grass intertwining his fingers as he desperately presented himself in front of all of his coworkers. Of course, it only increased the gossip around the place, with most people agreeing that being in the FBI wasn't a job suited for omegas and, even less, omegas who had failed their evaluation.

Beverly was staring and Will felt his face grow hot.

"I can't do this," he was quick to say. "I'll just quit. And then I won't have to deal with people's perceptions of me or how they feel my secondary gender affects the quality of my work."

"Stop, stop, stop. It's fine. We both know anything can trigger heats. I'm sure everyone's just worried, that's all. Jack hired a new doctor for the evals so there's no bias, and he's quite nice."

"You've met him?"

"Oh, yes, I had my evaluation yesterday afternoon. He's quite handsome, too."

Will knew how badly Beverly wanted to find a mate, but that it was a lot harder for her, since she was a beta and couldn't bear children. Will had his uterus to his advantage, but the clock was ticking. He had just turned thirty-two and hadn't dated anyone in four years.

He shook off the thought and sighed, "Well, what was it like? What did he ask?"

"You know, standard stuff. If there were any cases that were taking a toll on me, how long I'd been working at the Bureau, if I had been experiencing symptoms of burnout, stress or insomnia. He said I mostly seemed fine, just a bit hyper, and that I had been cleared."

Will was a bit calmer. He could definitely answer questions like that. "What else?" he asked.

"I don't know, Will. I doubt our evaluation will be the same, but I'm sure it will be smooth sailing. The guy really is a professional."

"Okay, good," he sighed. "Listen, there are some files I have to update, but l'll meet you later."

"Sure thing," she smiled before she squeezed his arm and disappeared into the hallway.

Will had no files to update whatsoever. In fact, he was never late on anything. Whenever he had a workload that was too heavy, he would simply stay in the office after closing hours to finish everything he needed to do. But he really felt the urge to get rid of Beverly so he could have some space to think. As he approached his desk, he noticed a penciled note in what was, undeniably, Jack Crawford's handwriting.

Will!

Psych eval today

Office 3B 11 AM

DO NOT SKIP IT

Will sunk in his squeaky chair as he stared at the paper. He had to start considering the worst and best case scenarios. The best one was easy—Will would be cleared and his work would go on as normal. The worst one, however, was a bit more daunting. It could be he got fired under the excuse that he wasn't professional enough to be a profiler. That he had let his embarrassing omega instincts get in the way of saving people's lives.

His head was hurting again, which was his suppressants' fault, so he rummaged around his satchel to find himself an aspirin, but had no luck. He had no choice but to endure the throbbing tempest within his skull until it was time for the evaluation.

He decided to get busy with organizing his desk, which was a tormented sea of files, papers, gum wrappers and blunt pencils he had no sharpeners for. It didn't help that it was still pouring outside and that he missed his dogs.

Office 3B was the largest and most reserved room in the Bureau. Jack seldom used it for anything, except for special occasions. A part of Will sensed that Jack had picked 3B precisely to give Will the feeling of privacy and secrecy he would certainly need to talk about the incident.

Every single time Will thought about it, his face burned hot with shame. It wasn't unusual for him to spend his nights awake, stuck in reruns of what happened. He had no idea how he would be able to open up to a total stranger who would be in charge of deciding his professional future.

He took a very deep breath as he stood by the door, his gaze lingering on the silver handle. His hands were shaky and his chest was churning with acidity. Will thought he could throw up from how nervous he was, but he was aware he couldn't let it show. He had to be as stoic and collected as possible, because instability was precisely the reason he had failed his evaluations before.

Will knocked on the door twice, his roseate knuckles hesitant.

"Come in," a low voice replied from the inside.

Will obliged and opened the door slowly. The first thing that caught his attention was the fierce smell coming from the inside. It was something along the lines of overripe grapefruit and old whiskey. The notes were subtle, but tangy enough to make Will flustered. He felt as if he had been transported to a sun-kissed orchard in the South, which came washing over him in waves, a cruel reminder of the paucity of his childhood.

So, his new doctor was an alpha.

“Good morning,” Will said as he dried his sweaty hands on his pants. “Uh, I’m Will Graham. I’m the 11 AM appointment.”

“Of course,” the doctor smiled and got up from the chair to walk towards Will. He offered him a handshake. “It’s a privilege and a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I’ve heard quite a lot about you. I’m Dr. Hannibal Lecter.”

Will shook the man’s hand as he tried not to be swallowed by the dark shades of maroon in his half-moonish, hollow eyes. He was tall, and had probably overdressed. He was wearing a three-piece dark green suit that featured a peak lapel, its upward-pointing edges creating a V-shape at the collar. There wasn’t a single lock of hair out of place, and Will thought that he might’ve been the kind to wear hairspray on the daily.

Beverly was right. He *was* handsome.

“Why don’t you take a moment’s reprieve and have a seat?” the doctor asked.

Will did as he was told and took the seat across from him.

“So, have you ever been to therapy?”

“I have not.”

“I see,” the doctor gave him a toothy grin. “Although I am a psychiatrist, I’m also a therapist. I’m able to prescribe you medications, sure, but I believe healing through speech is often more effective and cathartic.”

“I thought you were only going to be responsible for my evaluation.”

“Evidently, yes. However, it’s my duty to make myself available for whatever you may need. Jack Crawford wanted to ensure I’d make you feel at ease with me.”

Will didn’t know how to reply. He didn’t want to go to therapy. In fact, he didn’t even believe in therapy.

“I’m eager to delve into the intricate pathways of a mind like yours,” Dr. Lecter pressed.

“Like mine?”

“You’re a veritable enigma for us psychiatrists, as I’m sure you know.”

Will huffed and crossed his arms. “That doesn’t interest me at all.”

Dr. Lecter nodded carefully and shifted in his seat. “I understand. I suppose it’s best if we begin. Would you prefer to tell me about the incident before I ask any questions?”

Will had trouble swallowing. He was at a loss for words. What would he even say? How much did Dr. Lecter already know?

“I went into heat during a crime scene. I have no idea how or why. This had never happened before. Jack is worried that I’m… unstable and that it may affect my performance in the field. That’s all,” he said it all at once so he would have no time to overthink or regret it.

Dr. Lecter hummed in acknowledgement without ever breaking eye contact.

“And do you agree with Mr. Crawford?” he asked.

“No. Yes. I mean, I don’t know. I’ve been trying not to think about it, to be honest. I think it’s best that way.”

“Do you happen to have a support system?”

“What?”

“Family, friends, neighbors. Anyone you can confide in?”

Will was a bit caught back. He wasn’t expecting this question. “No,” he answered dryly.

“No? Any other inhabitants in your residency? A mate, perhaps?”

“Just me and my dogs.” Will felt a pang of embarrassment when he realized he was the only omega in the Bureau and that, even so, he was still unmated. He thought it certainly would count as another sign of instability. Loners and recluses were often more unstable than social butterflies—Will knew that because *most* serial killers were loners. He had noticed that throughout all of his time as a profiler.

“I see. What about relaxation and recreation? I’d be delighted to hear about your leisurely inclinations and how you elect to spend them.”

Will sighed. He had already decided that he hated therapy. “Well, I enjoy fishing. There’s a nice pond behind my house in Wolf Trap. I often spend my weekends lounging there, having sandwiches and enjoying the sun, when there is any, that is,” he let out a dry chuckle. “My dogs really like it, too.”

“That’s only the weekends. What about the other days?”

“Hm… I stargaze on my roof when I can’t sleep. And I read sometimes. I’ve been trying to read more to occupy my mind.”

“Ah, that’s clever. What genres do you tend to read?”

Will shrugged. “I don’t know. I read a lot of fishing books and some on wildlife. I’m currently reading *The Anatomy of Motive*, though. It’s quite good.”

Dr. Lecter’s eyes twitched almost imperceptibly. “What is it about, Will?”

“Motives behind crimes. It talks about some interesting techniques and methods used in criminal profiling and behavioral analysis to help law enforcement agencies solve complex cases.”

“So, a true crime book.”

“Yes and no. It’s a blend of true crime, psychology and law enforcement practices. It’s also great to understand more about forensic science.”

Dr. Lecter hummed. He crossed his legs and smiled just slightly. “Would you say it’s smart to spend your free time engaging in activities related to work?”

Will raised both of his eyebrows, amused. He couldn’t find an answer to that. In fact, he felt as if he was being challenged with rhetoric he didn’t have enough knowledge of to understand. After just a few minutes talking to this new psychiatrist, he already felt like a rat in a maze, as if there were no right answers and every single one he could come up with was wrong.

“Tell me, Will,” Dr. Lecter continued. “How do you recharge your vitality? Have you been having some invigorating sleep?”

It hit Will all at once—the nightmares, the sleepless nights, the sweats, how he dreamed about his deceased parents every week, how he always woke up on the brink of exhaustion no matter how many hours he slept.

“Yes,” he lied. He *needed* to be cleared for work. “I sleep just fine.” He could only hope Dr. Lecter wouldn’t bring up the heavy bags under his eyes.

“I see. You wouldn’t say the incident has affected the quality of your nighttime rest?”

Will shook his head. “Mm-mm. No.”

“Has it affected you at all?”

“It hasn’t,” he lied again. “I’m honestly unsure about why Jack was so adamant about me going through a psych eval.”

The ticking of the clock on the wall was deafening. Dr. Lecter tumbled his nimble fingers on the arm of the chair. His maroon eyes scanned Will’s body from top to bottom and stopped at his eyes. He wetted his lips as his nonchalant expression remained the very same at all times.

“Then, why are you shaking?” he said.

Will realized his limbs were, indeed, shaking, and that his back was damp with sweat. “Caffeine,” he replied in a voice that came out a lot meeker than he had intended.

“Very well. You see, Will, every therapeutic relationship necessitates an unwavering cornerstone of trust between the practitioner and the recipient of care."

Will scoffed, but it was obviously because he was intimidated. “Meaning?”

“Meaning… you mustn’t deceive me during our sessions. Otherwise, they’re pointless.”

“With all due respect, Dr. Lecter, I believe both you and Jack Crawford are overestimating the impact of what happened. I feel fine.” *He didn’t.* “Truly. I hardly think about it.” *He thought about it all the time.* “I honestly think this is unjustified.”

Dr. Lecter hummed. “I venture to presume your sagacity to guess that I, as the psychiatrist assigned to your care, have unfettered access to your records. And that I’ve read them all before our appointment. Thoroughly.”

Will gulped. He hated that he found no words in the tormented sea of his mind.

“Let’s agree on honesty, Will. I’m well aware that you took a year-long leave of absence from work. Your mental faculties were severely jeopardized, from what I’ve gathered.”

“I was sick,” Will didn’t mean to say it in between teeth, but it was too late.

“You had an issue with your heats. What was it, exactly?” Dr. Lecter asked, even though Will thought he already knew, from the way he worded it.

“Do we really have to talk about this?”

“It depends. Do you judge it as unnecessary?”

Will sighed and shifted in his seat. He thought that this was long buried in his past. All the stress, the humiliation, the doctor visits, the medications. Dr. Lecter was resurfacing it all without mercy.

“I had a heat that lasted seven months, that’s what happened. And nobody knew why. I lost a lot of weight because I forgot to eat, so I had to undergo parenteral nutrition. Then, I went bankrupt because of the hospital bills and lost my house. My dogs stayed with a friend while I was hospitalized, but half of them became depressed. I was feverish all the time and was on the verge of liver failure from all the antibiotics, because everyone thought I had an infection when I really never did. It was hell.”

Dr. Lecter nodded. Will thought he definitely already knew all that, but he couldn’t be sure how much detail he had found in the records. Will figured he might as well have been digging his own grave and laying down in a coffin deliberately from how he had opened up like a book to the doctor. But, alas, he guessed the truth would come up eventually. If he could have control over what version to tell, he would.

“And how did they cure you?” Dr. Lecter asked.

Will shrugged. “I’m on hormone therapy and corticoids.”

Dr. Lecter’s moonish eyes squinted obscurely. “I see. And how would you explain last month’s incident, considering you were being medicated?”

“I don’t. I have no idea what the fuck happened. But it was the worst heat of my life, even worse than the one that lasted seven months. I spent that whole week completely miserable. Couldn’t do anything. Could barely get up to go to the bathroom from how weak I was. Urinated all over myself more than once.”

“You went into heat during a crime scene and your boss let you spend it alone?”

“Well, they’re not really responsible for my well-being outside of work.”

“There are specialized facilities catered to such needs. People that could’ve been hired to make it easier for you. Perhaps, not even an alpha. A nurse alone would have proven significantly beneficial,” Dr. Lecter said, his tone laden with incredulity. “Someone to feed you and clean you while you’re unable. That’s all.”

Will felt broken inside. With everything going on in his life, he certainly didn’t have time to consider that he may have been neglected by the system and his coworkers. It might have been a product of the structural oppression omegas suffered with, as he had learnt in school and from what had happened to his mother.

The room was filled with silence once again. Will averted his gaze to the window only to realize it was still pouring outside. The stubborn raindrops pirouetted on the glass, serving as a melancholic interlude for Will’s inner turmoil. His world seemed to be blurring more and more each second he was trapped in that psychologically sterile room with Dr. Lecter.

“Care to share the musings of your thoughts?” the doctor asked with a gentle and inviting demeanor.

“I broke my umbrella.”

“Your umbrella?”

Will nodded, attempting eye contact as he treaded water. “It belonged to my mom. I haven’t had the heart to throw it away yet.”

Dr. Lecter nodded, but said nothing.

Will’s eyes were still focusing on the window. “I’ll make it home completely soaked,” he whispered, as if he was alone in the room and was simply making a mental note to himself. The rhythm of the rain embalmed him like a lullaby, in a hopeless reminder that Will might not find harmonious resolution ever in his lifetime.

The doctor checked the wall clock. Then, he pulled out an appointment card from his portmanteau and proceeded to scribble on it with his black Montblanc.

Will’s gaze turned to him. His heart was slowing down. Everything felt confusing. He wanted to ask what Dr. Lecter was writing, but words were evading him.

“I would like to see you once a week, Will. I believe I can certainly allow you to resume your professional pursuits for the time being, but I’ve identified some necessities in your psychological profile that warrant my discerning consideration. It’d be a flagrant breach of professionalism to simply give you a note and dispense with our encounters,” Dr. Lecter remarked.

With a measured grace, he rose from his seat and walked towards Will to proffer the card into his hand.

“I’m not sure I want to do that,” said Will.

“Oh, I’m fully aware. But I do take my job very seriously and I’m sure Mr. Crawford would be most gratified to hear of your willingness to engage in further sessions,” the doctor punctuated his statement with a subtle, yet discernible, wink.

Realization hit Will like a bullet in the back. Dr. Lecter was right. Agreeing to therapy would send the message that Will was being mature enough to address his issues and that he took his job seriously enough to understand he needed to get better to excel at it.

“I understand,” Will whispered as he stared at the card in his hand. “But you don’t think there’s something wrong with me, do you?”

Dr. Lecter’s expression softened for the first time since Will had seen him. “We ought to have plenty of time to discuss that,” he said. “I’d like to reassure you. To let you know that you don’t have to go through anything alone.”

Will thanked him sheepishly, got up without much ceremony and left the room without looking back.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

On that same day, Will was finishing up updating his reports. His wrist hurt from typing on his old computer all day and he felt *excruciatingly* cold. It was still raining outside, to his dismay. The Bureau was empty, as everyone had already left. People had families, mates, consistent hobbies—they were functional.

Will, on the other hand, felt like a shell of himself. He felt adrift in a boundless sea of desolation. Shame on him for being an omega, for not finding happiness in his daily life, for still brooding over his parents’ death every single day. And he would still have to face all that rain.

When he turned off his computer and stood up to head for the way out, he noticed something leaning on his desk.

It was a brand new jet black umbrella, certainly big enough to fit three people under it, its handle made of dark varnished mahogany. There was no note, but there was no need for one.

After an exhausting day, Will let himself have the luxury to curl his sad lips into a shy smile.

Awaken with the Flowers

Chapter Notes

Hello, everyone! As promised, here's chapter two. Thank you so much to the lovely Rhi for helping me with this fic.

This chapter is a bit more loaded than the previous one, even though it's shorter. As always, read the tags!

I hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was finally having time to himself, as it was the weekend. He thought long and hard about what Dr. Lecter had told him about reading work-related books in his spare time, so he didn't open *The Anatomy of Motive* for the first time in days.

Instead, he made his bed, took his suppressant pills, fed his dogs and ventured outside to go grocery shopping. He remembered to take his newly-gifted umbrella with him, even though it wasn't raining.

The local market was bustling with other shoppers, and there was a steady background noise of chatter and cart wheels sliding across the floor. Will surveyed the shelves and selected some of his favorite items—Scottish oats, peanut butter, a huge jar of artisanal pickles, crustless white bread and many IPA cans. It had been a while since he had last gotten drunk, and a part of him really wanted to let go.

Then, he bought a tall jar of capers and some passion fruit to prepare himself a decent lunch. In between yawns, he scanned and packed his items, and used his card to pay for them. Still chained to the cruel reminder of the paucity of his childhood, he checked his balance first. There was enough, and there had been enough for a good amount of years, but he still couldn't help checking.

His phone buzzed in his pocket and he saw it was a text from Beverly asking how the evaluation had been. Will didn't even know where to start. Sure, he had been cleared for work, which was his biggest worry, but he couldn't tell if it had gone well or badly. He would still have to keep seeing Dr. Lecter for an undetermined time, which brought him huge anxiety.

He decided to not answer and just put his phone away. Walking back home with his groceries, he took his time to enjoy the scenery on the way. The lush greens encompassed the rolling hills and something about the vastness of nature made Will feel so small and so nostalgic for something he couldn't quite place.

Will decided to shake off these feelings and just went straight home.

From his freezer, he pulled out a huge Northern pike he fished the other week and got to cooking. Every now and then, he fed little nibbles of the fish to his dogs.

“I know, Max. I know you really love it. But you have to leave some to the others, too,” Will cooed as he scratched behind Max’s ears.

He made himself some passion fruit sauce for the fish and covered it in capers. After opening up a beer, he opened up another one. And another one. The whole afternoon flashed before his eyes and, before he knew, he was back in the cocoon of his wool blanket, cozying up by the fireplace. The room was spinning just slightly and, with every sip, the whimsical dance of his memories unfolded even further.

Will didn’t remember how, but he found himself buried underneath his dogs, all of them sprawled on the living room’s floor. Zoe was licking his face, the little licks grounding him enough.

He fell asleep. Or blacked out.

Will woke up in a fright with the deafening noise of his cellphone’s alarm clock, which was the chorus of ‘Lullaby’ by The Cure, as it had been since he was a teenager. His muscles and joints were achy all over, his throat was dry and his tongue felt like sandpaper.

The clock read 6AM, which was when he fed his dogs every single day. He lifted his head with difficulty, in a bewildering and disoriented state. The living room seemed to spin in a dizzying dance of colors and shadows. His temples hurt like a bass drum in an echoing cavern.

“Sleep well?” a deep voice hummed from above him.

Will nearly broke his neck with the quickness he snapped it in the voice’s direction. There, within the confines of his unassuming home, was Dr. Lecter, sitting on the floor with Will, with a serene smile grazing his lips. He was wearing a hand-stitched cashmere sweater in a dark orange color, and bulky brown leather boots.

“What? What are you doing here?” panic rose in Will’s voice.

Dr. Lecter’s eyebrows twitched just slightly in confusion. “You called me. Don’t you recall doing so?”

“No? No,” he decided. “Not at all.”

“It’s not uncommon for alcohol-induced amnesia to be even rougher on omegas,” the doctor supplied.

“I don’t even have your number,” Will expeditiously retorted as he sat upright and massaged his weary eyes.

“I, too, found it rather unexpected. You told me you got it from Mr. Crawford. And that you weren’t feeling too well?” Dr. Lecter articulated it with the gentleness of a question. His expression was careful, as if he was afraid of being sent away.

“Oh,” said Will. “Dr. Lecter, I’m sorry. I haven’t drank in a while and I guess I went overboard with it. It was a mistake. I’m sure I didn’t mean to call you.”

“Yet, you did. I harbored concerns that you might imperil your well-being. I couldn’t turn away from your plea for help.”

“Plea for help?”

The doctor nodded.

“What did I even say?”

Dr. Lecter’s plump lips opened and closed, as if reconsidering whether Will was ready to have that conversation. “Why don’t you indulge in a shower and we can continue our conversation when you’ve had the chance to freshen up?”

Will realized he was sweaty inside his wool blanket and that he didn’t smell exactly nice.

“I have to feed the dogs–” he said as he tried to stand up hastily.

Dr. Lecter swiftly ensnared him by the waist before he could fall face down on the floor. “I’d be delighted to do that while you shower,” he offered graciously, his tone possessing a cadence of cultivated charm. “Just tell me where to find it.”

Will pointed him to the kitchen pantry with a shaky finger.

The doctor nodded and helped Will stand properly.

The sole act of being in Dr. Lecter’s presence felt a lot like being analyzed by him, like Will was being coerced to do things he didn’t exactly agree with—which, at the moment, was showering. Nonetheless, he made his way to the bathroom and started the water.

He took a good look at his reflection in the mirror and was appalled by his deep eye bags, unruly locks of hair and the faint remnants of dried saliva at the corners of his mouth. He grimaced at it and started to remove his clothes. Weirdly enough, his arms felt heavy and he had a bruise on his left one. It was of a light shade of pink, as if it had been recent, nestled within the innermost curve of his arm. No immediate recollection of it came to him.

Will made a mental note to tell his hematologist about it and to check his platelets soon. The threat that he might be getting sick again shadowed his thoughts.

He got under the shower spray and had some moments to himself to judge his decision of letting his new psychiatrist roam around his house by himself and even feed his elderly dogs. It was embarrassing to admit, but just the scent that radiated from Dr. Lecter had been enough for Will to somewhat trust him.

Trust.

A loaded word, heavy like the barrel of a gun inside a willing mouth. Will had never been someone to throw it around, but, for some reason, it felt fitting. He could only hope time wouldn't prove him wrong.

He washed his greasy hair, massaged his sore muscles with the liquid soap, rinsed his whole body, and shut the tap. Focusing on the noises around the house, Will could recognize Winston's barks downstairs. Now that he was considering it, it was unlikely that Dr. Lecter had managed to enter the house without being assaulted by the dogs.

The overripe grapefruit and old whiskey notes made their way into Will's nostrils and he instantly felt his jaw and shoulders go lax. All that tension that had been pent up in his body was dissolving like a sugar cube in water. He cracked his knuckles, one by one, before getting dressed to go downstairs.

When Will met Dr. Lecter again, the man was caressing Harley's reddish chestnut fur as he fed him.

"Hello," said Will, a bit softer than he had intended.

Dr. Lecter's maroon eyes met Will's. Will didn't fail to notice how the doctor scanned his body from head to toe, even though it had been way too swift.

"Will. Do you feel any better?" the doctor inquired with measured concern.

Will nodded. "I do. Yes. A shower can go a long way, especially when one's reckless enough to get drunk on beer."

A hint of amusement danced in Dr. Lecter's raised brows as he considered the remnants of empty bottles aligned upon the kitchen counter. "I dare say, it appears to have been more than just a few beers," he observed, his gaze lingering upon the evidence.

Flushed with embarrassment, Will's features conveyed a semblance of sheepishness. "What happened, Dr. Lecter?"

The doctor's expression closed, "I received your call sometime around 9PM last night. You said you were experiencing vivid nightmares. And something that eluded my full comprehension about sleepwalking. You mentioned… a *dark thought*."

Will definitely didn't recall any of that. He was both worried about his mental state and feeling like he had revealed way too much too soon. "What kind of thought?" he hesitantly asked.

"I'd be willing to have you in my office for a weekend appointment, if you'd accept," the doctor suggested.

Will remained quiet, though his stomach was determined to make its voice heard with a loud growl.

“I’m a fairly good cook,” Dr. Lecter punctuated. “If you’d be kind enough to let me go through your refrigerator, I’d be delighted to prepare a meal of your liking before our appointment.”

“Listen, I’m fine on my own. Truly. I understand that my call must’ve worried you, but I can take care of myself,” Will deflected. “I’m confused right now and I don’t think talking will serve as any aid.”

Dr. Lecter didn’t move. He seemed to be waiting for the final nail on the coffin of the inevitable rejection that was dawning upon him.

His silence made Will uneasy. He also wanted to say that he thought it was unprofessional to maintain a friendship with his psychiatrist, but he didn’t wish to be rude to someone who was obviously solely trying to help. “Besides, I don’t think *this*,” he gestured between the two of them, “would be good for my therapy,” he said instead.

The doctor finally stood up from where he was crouched feeding the dogs and gave Will a dim-witted smile. “As you wish, Will. Apologies if I overstepped. Though I must clarify, I only had your best interests in mind.”

Will dismissed the apology vaguely in lieu of a verbal reply.

“I ought to be on my way, then.”

Will nodded, firm in his decision, and walked towards the door to escort Dr. Lecter out. The dogs whined in unison, dreading the departure.

The doctor caught the cue and followed. Just from how smoothly he moved, it seemed his neck glands were being fanned with every stride of his long legs, his pheromones clouding Will’s small kitchen like poison gas. “If you do need me, you have my number,” he remembered before stepping out.

Will thanked him and closed the door on him before he could reconsider his decision.

Dr. Lecter was gone, but his overripe grapefruit was *everywhere*. Its aroma was simultaneously tart and sweet, a zesty tang that embalmed Will in a gentle embrace. Will felt suffocated.

And why was Ellie’s muzzle dirty? Will hadn’t fed them steak in a while. He wetted a washcloth in the kitchen sink and cleaned her gently. The more he cleaned it, the stronger the metallic smell got, intertwining with the insistent grapefruit. Will looked down at the cloth, now stained with a bright shade of wine red.

Fresh blood.

Perhaps, they had been digging dead animals by the lake again. It would make sense, since it had been raining quite frequently, which made the odors rise up.

Will busied himself the rest of the weekend with *The Anatomy of Motive* and pickles dipped in crunchy peanut butter.

When he went to his room to lie down because his migraine was back, he found two bottles of lime cucumber Gatorade by his bedside table, along with some chewable ibuprofen tablets, a cooling gel pack and a small tub of aloe vera gel.

Will felt invaded by knowing Dr. Lecter had been in his room without his permission, and he wondered what the man had thought of Will's underwear scattered through the floor, of the wet towel on the bed and handfuls of dog hair all over.

But the most intuitive part of him was making his heart race. He felt seen for the first time in forever. It was scary to be under someone's spotlight that way. Will had a knot in his stomach and he couldn't tell if it was butterflies or anxiety for a bad foreboding.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading it! If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. I hope you have a wonderful week. All my love.

Knife’s Blade of Melancholy

Chapter Notes

Hey, everyone! Thank you so much to each of you who has left a comment, kudos or subscribed to the work. It definitely motivates me! As promised, here's this week's chapter.

Thank you to Batty and Kel for rooting for me.

As always, read the tags before reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will went to work as usual during the following week. He didn’t take Dr. Lecter’s ibuprofen or drink the beverages he left. He did check his cell phone, however, and was relieved to find that Dr. Lecter’s number was, indeed, saved to his contacts. After all, the man had no reason to lie to Will. He had nothing to gain from it.

Besides, playing the devil’s advocate, Will could acknowledge the constant presence of inherent paranoia in his life. In hindsight, he had gathered that Dr. Lecter seemed to be a more contemporary alpha, someone who exhibited no inclination to take advantage of emotionally fragile omegas, especially those under his psychiatric care. During their two brief interactions, the doctor had exuded nothing but kindness and solicitude, even going as far as lending a friendly shoulder for Will to lean upon.

Will settled for paranoia as an explanation for his discomfort.

He made his way into the bureau with achy eyes and a heavy head, both reflecting the weariness that nestled within the recesses of his mind.

“Didn’t even answer my texts,” Beverly said as soon as she saw him.

Will replied with a faux, exasperated sigh. “I’m sorry. I drank too much,” he chose to tell only half of the truth.

“Thought you were a recovering alcoholic?”

“No longer recovering, apparently.”

Beverly nodded carefully. “You’ve been drinking whiskey before bed again?”

Will wanted to tell her that it was even worse, that he had been stuffing his face with Xanax and vodka since the incident.

Before he could ponder whether he wanted to disclose that or not, Jimmy Price shot him a wave from across the bureau, which Will reciprocated.

“Haven’t seen Price or Zeller in a while,” Will commented, more to himself than to Beverly.

“They’re neck-deep in this new case, apparently. Jack said all they had was a desperate fiancé call and a credit card bill. I haven’t had the chance to look into the details yet.”

“What’s the victim’s name?”

“Olivia Johnson.”

Will hummed. It would’ve been the first time that Jack had bypassed him and gone straight to Price and Zeller for opinions on a case. He wondered if Dr. Lecter had shared the details of their appointment with Jack, and if he could even do that at all. Anxiety spiked in his chest.

“Talk to you later,” he dismissed Beverly and left before she could protest. He had more important issues than appearing to be polite and masking his social awkwardness.

When he made it to his desk, he was surprised to see that it had been completely tidied.

The once thrown around files had been organized in alphabetical order on the shelves, the gum wrappers were gone, and all of the pencils had been sharpened. All the computer wires that were once polluting the view were now concealed behind a modesty panel, which gave Will a clean and unobstructed view. But the cherry on top was a brand new lamp, which was casting a warm glow over the mahogany.

Will looked around frantically, trying to look for the culprit. No one seemed to be sharing the same curiosity as him—they were all looking down, concentrating on their respective tasks.

So, he sat down at the desk and busied himself by fidgeting with the pencils. A part of him wanted to text Dr. Lecter and thank him, maybe even ask how he had guessed that the mess of his desk had gotten too overwhelming for him to clean.

He didn’t, however. Instead, he logged into the system to check the reports on the case Beverly had told him about.

A strong feeling of disquiet set low in Will’s gut as he clicked on the file.

Case Number: #972403 — OLIVIA ROSE JOHNSON
DOB: 12/13/1991

Summary
On November 7th 2023, Miss Johnson was reported missing by her fiancé, Arthur dos Reys. She was last seen grocery shopping in Inner Harbor on November 6th, at approximately 21h. Since then, she has not been in contact with her fiancé or close friends. Mr. dos Reys claims Miss Johnson often goes grocery shopping around the area and that she’s well-known by vendors and neighbors. He also states that she’s a purebred omega and presented at fourteen.

Forensic Investigations

Miss Johnson's cell phone and laptop were both seized and thoroughly analyzed. The only finding was a commercial transaction that transpired on her American Express, indicating an expenditure of the sum of USD 208.97. The transaction was traced back to 'Fromage & Vino Emporium,' an esteemed establishment located in Inner Harbor. The monetary exchange was made at 20h03, on November 6th.

No fingerprints or foreign DNA samples were found in Miss Johnson's home or in 'Fromage & Vino Emporium.'

Preliminary inquiries about her whereabouts have led to Mr. Hunter Schwartz, cashier at the Emporium. He claims her visit was marked by her usual phlegm, and that she purchased the same wine she had been purchasing for the last three years, a bottle of Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia.

Conclusion

The disappearance of Miss Johnson remains an ongoing investigation as of this date.

The report was signed by both Zeller and Price, and had already been revised by Jack Crawford. Will kept wondering why his input hadn't been requested. As selfish as it was, he was more concerned about the incident having jeopardized his reputation than with Olivia's disappearance.

Before he could stop himself, he had already dialed Dr. Lecter's number.

"Hello?" the alpha's deep voice rumbled from the other side of the line two rings later.

"Dr. Lecter. It's Will."

The doctor let out a small humorous huff through his nose because, well, of course it was. "Yes. How can I be of assistance, Will?"

Will fidgeted with the sharpened pencils again as he mulled over on the best way to say what he wanted to say. "I'm worried about the implications of the incident," he decided to go with.

"Personal implications?"

"Professional ones."

"How so?"

"I'm considering that Jack might be deliberately keeping me at bay. That he no longer trusts my judgment or expertise."

"I understand. And what has led you to that conclusion?"

Will realized someone could eavesdrop, so he got up to make a beeline for the bathroom and lock himself in a stall for some privacy.

He sat on the toilet's lid, knees to his chest, and whispered, "I feel like I might be going insane."

"Insane?"

"Not quite insane, I don't think. Paranoid, maybe."

Dr. Lecter hummed and the cadence of his voice made Will's spine shiver. "Being paranoid doesn't exclude the possibility of someone actually being after you."

The thought was daunting and Will hated it. He couldn't find a proper answer to that, so he said nothing.

"Have you recovered from your binge drinking episode?" the doctor asked.

"Oh, I have, mostly." Will debated whether he should open up about his Xanax problem, but chose not to. "I was hoping we could move up my appointment. I don't think I can wait another three days," he exhaled.

"I have a free slot in my schedule this evening, at 7:30. My office is in uptown Ruxton. I'll send you the address. Could you drive over after work?"

"I could. I'm sorry for calling."

Dr. Lecter's smile was audible, "You're free to reach out at your convenience, Will. Always."

"Thank you," Will mumbled, still not knowing how to deal with the doctor's extreme availability. "I'll let you know when I'm on my way."

"It's a deal, then. Take care, Will."

Will hung up. He sat in silence in the bathroom as he tried to understand the recent events. He felt as if his throat was closing and just the imminent threat of being under Dr. Lecter's careful gaze once again made a vortex stir in the pit of his stomach.

Will checked his wristwatch and realized he was a bit early. He was standing outside Dr. Lecter's office, wondering if he should sit down on the leather couch or if the doctor would take him as being way too blowzy if he did.

He decided to stand, even though he was shifting his weight on his legs from how tired he felt. It certainly didn't help that it had been so cold lately, Will's omega genes being a disadvantage more often than not.

The door opened. "Good evening, Will. Glad to see you've made it on time," Dr. Lecter greeted him warmly.

Will gave him an awkward smile as he felt hyper aware of his empty hands, tugging at the hem of his jacket.

“Do come in,” the doctor said as he moved out of the doorway.

Will obliged.

Dr. Lecter’s office was intimidating, to say the least. It was wide and spacious, and it had an extensive library on the second floor. It exuded an air of intellectual elegance that immediately made Will compare it to his own humble home and feel a pang of embarrassment.

But what most caught Will’s wandering eyes was the painting on the wall, front and center.

It was of a big gray wolf, baring its ferocious teeth to a lamb, who was trying to nurse from her. Two things stood out to Will—one, the chiaroscuro of the theme and colors, a clear play between innocence and predation and two, the semantics of misleading the weakest, a tragic commentary on the sheer, childlike hope nurtured by the lamb.

Will noticed Dr. Lecter was staring, so he looked away and sat down on his designated chair.

“Did you have a tranquil drive?” the doctor asked as he sat opposite Will.

“I did. This is a very nice neighborhood.”

“One could say that, yes.”

“How’s crime around here?”

“It’s rather quiet. To be candid, most horrid things that happen around here don’t even make the evening news. Too many powerful people who can pay to swipe it under the carpet.”

Will hummed. He crossed his legs, looked around. The image of the nursing lamb was burned into his brain.

“Would you like to get into the reason for your emergency appointment?” Dr. Lecter asked.

Will wrinkled his nose. “You’re not from around here, are you? You have this… accent I can’t place.”

“Deflecting questions before we even begin?”

Will’s face got instantly hot for having been caught in the act. “I don’t even think therapy works on me. It’s fucking bullshit. The sole fact that I’m giving it a chance should be enough,” he retorted, rather dryly.

“And it is,” Dr. Lecter agreed. “It’s more than enough.”

Will exhaled dramatically, as if the motion could lessen the tension in his sinews. “I called… because I needed to talk about some things. Things that have happened to me a long time ago, but also the recent consequences.”

“Yes?”

“But I don’t know how to start.”

“Very well. Why don’t you start from the beginning?”

Will rolled his eyes and removed his glasses to pinch the bridge of his nose. “I can’t. Really can’t.”

“Do elaborate.”

“I’ve never talked about it to anyone before.”

“I see.” Dr. Lecter stayed silent for a few seconds before he spoke up again. “I’m aware this is only our second formal encounter, but I’d like to try something, if you consent to it.”

“What is it?”

The doctor stood up and walked towards his wooden cabinet to retrieve something. Will watched him with curious eyes, too focused on the expanse of his broad shoulders and on how his biceps were bulging through his suit, even under several layers of fabric.

Dr. Lecter soon came back and handed Will a black blindfold. He instructed him to put it on.

Will took it begrudgingly and tied it behind his head, mindful of his curls.

“We’ll be exploring arm levitation hypnosis, Will,” the doctor explained. “It’s an Ericksonian technique.”

“Uh. Okay. What now?” Will asked, antsy as he shifted in the leather seat.

“Now, take a deep breath in and exhale as slowly as you possibly can. Picture all the tension in your body as running water, dripping out of you in a constant stream. Completely liquid and to your mercy.”

Will did as he was told, focusing on the timber of Dr. Lecter’s voice, smooth as new velvet.

“That’s good,” the doctor praised him. “Remember the very function of your lungs. Use them. You’re doing fine.”

Will remembered how his mother used to talk to him when she was feeding him, eerily similar. He also remembered that he used to choke a lot because he wanted too much milk too quickly. It was one of the only tender memories of her he still had.

“I’m feeling a bit more relaxed,” he said as his chest lowered and raised slowly, omitting the real reasons that may have been behind that.

“Excellent,” said Dr. Lecter. “Imagine a warm wave, an electric current, starting at the soles of your feet. It’s gradually moving up through your shins, knees, thighs…”

“Okay. I’m imagining it.”

“The wave floods your torso and reaches both of your arms. You’re in a sun-drenched room, and the subtle tingle of the rays reaches your bones with ease. You can feel the gold in your veins and arteries, feeding the drum of your heart, which is stubborn to keep beating despite it all.”

“I… I feel it.”

“Pay close attention to my voice. I’m going to count from one to three. When I reach three, your left arm will feel weightless and start to rise.”

“Rise?” Will was trying to give it a shot the best he could, but he was also quite confused.

“Yes, rise,” the doctor parroted. “Like a helium balloon straight into the stratosphere. Are you ready?”

“I guess I am.”

“One.”

Will’s nose picked up the scent Dr. Lecter’s neck glands were producing. The familiar overripe grapefruit and old whiskey invaded his omega nostrils like a tropical storm. Yes, the room was sun-drenched. And there were grapefruit trees everywhere, its bounteous branches being so kind as to let the fruits fall to the ground. Will pictured himself, sinking his teeth into one of them, finding much more nourishment than he ever did with milk.

“Two.”

The space around Will was akin to a limbo. Even though he couldn’t see anything, he could feel it all—the insistent reruns of his past, the pungence of the doctor’s voice, how badly he needed to eat something. He was *starving*.

“Three.”

As if on cue, Will’s left arm slowly began to rise against his willpower.

“That’s it,” Dr. Lecter encouraged him. “Your body is responding to the deep state of relaxation we’ve put you in.”

“It’s… it’s weightless,” Will spoke through his disbelief as he couldn't feel his arm at all. “Dr. Lecter, I’m scared,” his voice broke at the end of the sentence.

“Don’t be. You’re safe here. I’m holding your hand every step of the way.”

Will nodded as his arm was finally in parallel with his head.

“Your body is see-through,” said Dr. Lecter. “You’re free. Free to roam around your thoughts as you please. You command them. They do not command you.”

“I miss my mom,” Will whispered as he felt a hot tear make its way down his cheek. “And I’m ashamed of my gender. I’m insecure about my performance at work. And I… I feel so

light. My head hurts so badly," he whined.

"It's okay, Will. That's enough for today. I'll count from one to three once more. When I reach three, your arm will slowly descend. Do you understand?"

Will just nodded. He was afraid that, if he opened his mouth to reply, he would end up sobbing like a neglected child—which was, probably, who he still was on the inside.

"One. Two. Three."

Will's arm slowly descended from the air and onto his lap, limp like a seagull's wing, dipping and swaying erratically.

"When you're ready, you can remove the blindfold," Dr. Lecter instructed.

With shaky hands and still not completely aware of his left arm, Will reached behind his head to untie the blindfold. His fingers were tingling like they usually did when he slept on his hand after too many Xanax pills.

When he recovered his vision, the sole sight of Dr. Lecter staring at him made him blush. He just couldn't believe that something as foolish as a hypnosis session had made him open up so bashfully.

Dr. Lecter handed him a box of tissues and only then, Will realized his face was completely damp with involuntary sadness. He reached out for the box before he could think twice and dried his cheeks as fast as he could.

"Was I too rough on you?" the doctor asked.

"No, no. Definitely, not. I'm… not used to being so in touch with my feelings, is all. I don't cry much. I haven't cried in a long time, actually."

"There's no shame in crying. Tears are analgesic."

"Yes. I… I'm hungry," he said right before his stomach rumbled like thunder in the country.

"Oh, Will. The more I know you, the more you look like a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs."

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"It means our time is up for today. You've made great, astounding progress. I truly believe you and I will be able to offer your mind relief in no time," Dr. Lecter said as he stood up.

It was only then that Will realized that the lights of the office had been dimmed down. It felt incredibly cozy, even so under the protective gaze of Dr. Lecter's moonish maroon eyes. Will was afraid that they would consume him whole, burn him to the ground like laser beams, from how intensely they were drilling through his skull. He stood up, too, way too hastily.

"I'll see you next week," the doctor smiled, utter satisfaction plastered on his charming face.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading it! If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. I hope you have a wonderful week. All my love.

Your Plastic Toy

Chapter Notes

I'm one day late, but I'm here! Thank you for the +200 kudos and for the lovely comments. It means the world, especially considering this story is still a WIP!

Also, here are some songs I think fit this universe:
Lullaby - The Cure
Closer - Nine Inch Nails
Destroy Myself Just For You - Montell Fish
Forever - Alex G
Change (In the House of Flies) - Deftones
Dawn in the Adan - Ichiko Aoba
Just Like Honey - The Jesus and Mary Chain
Star Roving - Slowdive
Codependency - Unaloon
When the Sun Hits - Slowdive
Sextape - Deftones
Pretend - michi
Fade Into You - Mazzy Star

As always, check the tags before reading.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A flicker of relief had washed over Will after his session. He hadn't spoken to Dr. Lecter in a few days, but the afterglow of opening up was still present. A minute part of Will felt guilty and uneasy about it, because speaking about his feelings was terribly foreign to him. He even thought the hypnosis session had been a premature measure, felt as if his past had been ripped out of him without consent.

But none of those anxious impressions prevailed for long. The reigning one was sheer relief.

He had been so troubled with his memories that he and Dr. Lecter didn't even have time to address the struggles of the present—how Will felt his career was slipping through his fingertips like thin sand.

Zeller's and Price's signatures on Olivia Johnson's report were playing on repeat in Will's head. They weren't qualified. It should've been Will's name at the bottom of the page instead. He was sure that, if he had been consulted, they would be much closer to finding the victim.

Which is why Will barged into Jack's office, with fury in his cheeks and a natural haste in his step.

"Care to explain why the fuck I wasn't consulted about Olivia Johnson?"

"Will, calm down," Jack spoke as if he was replying to a teenage son. He didn't even get up from his chair. The other people who were sitting around the table looked dumbfounded by Will's behavior, but not Jack. Never Jack. "We can talk about your concerns once my meeting is over."

"This meeting *is* over," Will growled. "Everyone, get the fuck out."

All those suited-up alphas and betas exchanged looks with Jack, who just nodded and gestured for them to leave.

Will waited for them to pack their belongings and leave the room in an awkward silence.

They closed the door behind them, and Will approached Jack with violence in the squint of his eyes.

Jack sighed as he loosened his tie. "I know it was only a matter of time until you found out, but I needed to buy some time."

"Time for what?"

"For you to recover."

"I don't need to recover! I had a hormonal imbalance, that's all that happened! But you're all too fucking fixated on how omegas are supposed to be weak, fragile, pathetic creatures to see me as someone who can both have a hormone problem and a brilliant mind."

Jack averted his eyes, adjusted his name plaque on the table, sighed again.

"What? If you don't give me satisfaction about this, I'm going to sue you. I'm going to sue all of you for what you're doing to me and my career," Will pressed.

"I understand you're upset and that it feels like a personal vendetta based on gender, but it's far from the truth," Jack retorted. "Tell me, Will. How much do you remember of the incident?"

Will faltered, felt his breath hitch in his throat. He didn't understand why Jack was asking him that question. "Not much," he replied truthly.

"Is there something you remember at all?"

"I remember the grass. And the shame."

Jack hummed, careful. "What else?"

Will seemed to think for a while. “Someone… put me in a car and dropped me off at home, I think. Beyond this point, it’s just complete darkness.”

Jack nodded. “I can only imagine how confusing it is to go through heat. I only know ruts and they’re bad enough. But that’s not all that happened that day, Will. If it had been a slip of your suppressants or a mere hormone imbalance, we wouldn’t be taking all of these precautions.”

“Well? And what happened?”

“It’ll be hard to hear this, Will. I was hoping I wouldn’t have to tell you.”

Will huffed nervously, and plopped down on the chair opposite Jack. His thighs were shaking against each other as he tried to hold them in place with his hands. He urged Jack to carry on.

Jack was quiet for a few seconds before he spoke up, “You weren’t feeling too well, is what I’d say. When the heat wave hit your body, you repeatedly asked us to kill you. Katz tried to restrain your arms, but you kicked her shin and bit her. We tried very cautiously to calm you down, but you kept saying you were going to shoot yourself.”

Will could feel his cheeks exploding with warmth, absolutely mortified. He had no words to utter.

“Dr. Lecter happened to be on site when it happened, as he was helping on an adjacent case with the DEA. And you… presented yourself to him. Even though you two had never met before, which was very odd,” Jack added with concern in his cadence. “We were all worried that you were going to hurt yourself, so I drove you home.”

The influx of information was brutal. Will felt as if his throat was closing, and it was hard to tell if it was from anxiety, embarrassment or knowing that Dr. Lecter was aware Will found him somewhat attractive.

“And you left me there alone…” was all Will could come up with. “You locked me in from the outside. I know that because I tried leaving at one point, but someone had taken my keys.”

“I’m sorry, Will,” Jack sounded genuine. “I had to put your life first.”

Will felt a single hot tear slide down his cheek, and he soon wiped it with his palm, determined to not let anyone see him crumble. “You could’ve hired someone,” he repeated what Dr. Lecter had told him. “You could’ve done something to help. Anything. But you didn’t. None of you did.”

“Katz delivered canned food and coconut water to your house. And Zeller put out a patrol watch outside… in case anyone smelled you.”

Now that Jack had mentioned it, Will did remember eating canned chickpeas and warm coconut water that he didn’t have enough conscience to wonder where they had come from. The thought that his coworkers had done anything at all was slightly comforting, but it didn’t

change the fact that none of them tried to alleviate Will's urge, probably because they weren't omegas. They simply underestimated that a brutal heat could kill an omega, even more an unmated one with a previous history of a seven month long cycle.

"I value your professional opinions more than you know," said Jack. "You're a great asset to the Bureau, and I've always been a bit in awe of how the gears turn in your mind. I wouldn't have you seen by a psychiatrist if I didn't care about keeping you around. It'd be much easier for me to just fire you. Unfortunately, the laws would be on my side."

Will nodded, his eyes zeroed in on the wall behind Jack. His legs were no longer shaking, but there was a poignant ache in the middle of his chest, right behind his sternum, nestled in his soul.

"And this… thing. That happened with Dr. Lecter. I wonder why the Bureau didn't seek another doctor to be assigned to me," said Will, though there was no anger or accusation in his tone, just confusion.

"Dr. Lecter is very passionate about his craft, Will. This is something you'll learn eventually. When he witnessed you in those conditions, he volunteered to assist you."

"Volunteered?" Will parroted.

Jack nodded, seemingly giving Will time to absorb it all. "He has published plenty of articles on heat dysphoric disorders in male omegas, and he has a doctorate on reproductive health."

"I see…"

"Besides," added Jack, "he was the only one who was able to calm you down."

'Calm you down.' As if Will was a toddler throwing a tantrum. Or a violent psychopath fighting his way out of a straitjacket. No, in their eyes, being an omega at large was a much worse condition to have.

Nonetheless, Jack's word choice still made the memory of his hypnosis session with Dr. Lecter flood Will's senses. The citrusy brightness of the doctor's pheromones invaded his nostrils, and the smoky whiskey undertones made his mucosa sting and burn. Will closed his eyes, lulled by it. Drunk.

"Will, do you feel alright?" Jack asked, worried.

"I need to go home," was the only feeling Will could translate. His own voice sounded sluggish and stupid in his ears. He managed to reopen his eyes. "I can't be here a second longer."

"That's fine. Everyone else can hold the fort while I allow you a few days off to unwind. I can give you Dr. Lecter's number, so you're well-assisted."

That instantly created a knot in Will's gut. "His number?"

"Unless he's already given it to you?"

Instinctively, Will reached for his front pocket. His nervous fingers hovered over his phone, but he decided against confronting Jack. Perhaps, he wasn't the one who needed to be confronted.

"Yes," said Will. "He has."

"Very well. I'll justify your absence. Are three days enough, you'd say?"

"They are. I need some time. I think," Will decided, even though he had a feeling that time wouldn't patch up the abyss in his chest. He craved something he couldn't pinpoint.

He packed his belongings as quickly as possible to leave his desk. His drive home was its own walk of shame. Everyone knew he was going AWOL from work for the third time that year and it wasn't hard to guess why.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

Will got home later than usual due to the overwhelming traffic. His body was hurting and he felt so out of touch with reality. He drew himself a scorching bath and got in with a huge bowl of green grapes.

Whenever his dogs sensed that Will was a bit under the weather, they would pile outside the bathroom door, waiting for him to finish his bath. Will could barely concentrate with how Jack and Ellie were howling and whining.

Defeated, he interrupted his self-care session to open the door for them.

All of the dogs entered the claustrophobic bathroom and sat quietly on the rug. Will kissed Winston's head and immersed into the water again.

As he was closing his eyes to drift off to a much needed sleep, his phone buzzed beside him.

"Ugh. Didn't Jack tell people I'm taking a break from work?" he grumbled to himself as he reached out for the phone nonetheless.

Dr. Lecter *Good evening, Will. I've heard you requested some time off from work. I'm available if you wish to talk.*

Will sighed as he stared at how pretentious the message sounded. He didn't even want to reply, but it was too late not to, as he had already opened the text. His thumbs hovered over the keyboard as he jumbled with what he wanted to say.

As it had happened before, Will rang Dr. Lecter without giving himself the luxury to think twice.

It rang only once. "Hello, Will," the alpha's voice was smooth like velvet.

"Dr. Lecter," Will exhaled as he curled his toes underwater and rubbed his feet together.

"How are you holding up?"

“Just peachy.”

“Is that so? I suppose my work here is done, then.”

“Actually, no. I’m fucked in the head,” Will admitted as he fiddled with his fingers.

“Did anything happen to prompt your work leave? Or was it burnout creeping on you?”

“Jack told me details about the incident. That’s what happened.”

Dr. Lecter hummed. “Details?”

“You were there.”

“I was, yes.”

“He said you were with the DEA on the field. It was a striking coincidence.”

“That’s right, Will.”

“I kneeled on the grass for you.”

“You did.”

Will wetted his lips before he spoke, “I… begged for your knot up my cunt.”

The doctor went silent. Will heard shifting on the other side of the line.

“I fail to grasp how that’s grave at all, Will,” said Dr. Lecter.

“How so?” Will asked, his heart hammering in his chest cavity.

“I was the nearest person who could offer you relief, that’s all.”

“Not just a person.”

“No?”

“An alpha.”

“Yes. Has this been troubling you?”

Will considered it for a few moments. “It evades my comprehension why this has been kept a secret until now. I feel like you’re all playing a game whose rules I can’t understand.”

“Oh, Will… this was a joint decision between Mr. Crawford and myself. We had to consider that adding more stress to your situation wouldn’t be a smart move. It wouldn’t be therapeutic.”

Will huffed and switched his phone to his other hand. “You’re all a bunch of hypocrites. You think you have ownership over peoples’ lives. You don’t.”

“Care to explain your point of view?”

“Those were *my* memories. *My* experiences. I had the right to know,” bitterness filled Will’s mouth like tar and spread through his veins like poison.

“I respect how you feel. It’s only fair.”

Will sighed impatiently, “I don’t think you do at all.”

“I could lend you my report, if that would bring you peace of mind. Perchance, it might even fortify our bond.”

“Our… bond?”

“Our therapist-client bond. I believe we’ve made some progress, but there’s still so much that needs to be achieved. Would that alleviate your concerns and make you feel more at ease with me, Will?”

Dr. Lecter’s voice was syrupy like liquid chocolate and some part of Will wondered if he was using some of his alpha voice on him. The smoothness of it slid down Will’s throat with delicious ease, making the tension in Will’s shoulders loosen in a second.

“Yes. I would like that,” Will agreed. His neck went lax as he soaked in the hot water.

“Very well. Where’s your mind right now?”

“Everything sucks.”

“Try and specify what’s not pleasing you.”

Will yawned as he crossed his legs. He looked at his dogs, watching him from outside the tub. “For starters, my dogs are seeing me naked.”

Dr. Lecter let out a small, unamused chuckle. “Naked?”

“I’m in the bath. They were whining outside, so I let them in.”

“I see. Would you prefer to call me back at a more convenient time?”

“No, no. I don’t mind. It’s not like you can… see me through the phone or anything.”

The doctor hummed in agreement. “Omega skin usually stays pruned up for longer.”

“Did you read that somewhere? Or even worse, did you write about it in one of your billion published articles?”

“No, I’ve witnessed it firsthand.”

“Oh, really?” Will’s voice went up an octave. “With whom?”

“I’ve had omega partners before, Will.”

Will shrugged and raised his eyebrows. “Right, of course. I’m usually very easily irritated by changes in texture or consistency, but this, in particular, doesn’t bother me.”

“Can you pinpoint why?”

“It’s not like I have anyone to touch me,” Will didn’t mean to sound so sour and acrimonious, but it was too late.

“I understand. Is that an issue for you?”

“Lousy, lousy psychiatry, Dr. Lecter,” said Will before he realized he was deflecting questions again. “My main issue is how hungry I am right now. So hungry I could eat a horse, saddle and all.”

“I’ve noticed you starve quite often. Is cooking an option?”

“It could be. But that would entail me going grocery shopping, and I can’t be bothered. Not when it’s freezing and I’m so tired that I feel like a wet dishrag that has been wrung out.”

“Mhm, I see your predicament.”

“That’s one way to put it,” Will uttered a humorous huff.

“In an ideal world, what would you enjoy eating?”

“I don’t know. A pizza, maybe. Pepperoni and some aged mozzarella. Oh, and baked in a wood-fired oven,” Will hummed appreciatively. “The best pizzas I’ve ever had were all from Pupatella. They have a humongous wood-fired oven there. It’s two hundred years old.”

“I’ve heard of it.”

“It’s so good. I haven’t gone there in years, though. Too expensive. I wonder if they still use Italian sauce.”

“I’m more of a roast man myself,” said Dr. Lecter. “The chateaubriand, for instance, is a favorite of mine.”

“Come on, don’t be daft. You would say no to a Pupatella pizza?”

“Probably. I rarely eat out. I’m profoundly fond of cooking and… quite judicious about what I ingest.”

Will snorted. “You’re not fun at all. Pretentious, even,” it was the second time that evening that the adjective had come to Will’s head as fitting to describe Dr. Lecter.

“I merely have principles, Will. Perhaps, if you were more cautious about what you eat, you wouldn’t be hungry so often. A good meal, rich in protein and fat, keeps one satiated for long.”

Buster howled as he rubbed his furry head on Will's elbow, which was leaning against the tub's edge.

Will groaned. "I have to go. My dogs need feeding. And it's not wise to let my omega skin prune up, apparently."

"That's alright. Have a good night, Will."

"Likewise, Dr. Lecter."

Will hung up the phone and proceeded to wash his hair and body as quickly as he could, while simultaneously telling his dogs to quiet down. Dr. Lecter was right, Will had never realized how badly his skin pruned up. The pad of his fingers looked like maps of the Grand Canyon—each wrinkle, a deep crevasse.

He would definitely buy himself a good moisturizer when he had the time.

Later that night, Will had already fed his dogs and put on his pajamas. He was cozying up on his couch, shielding himself from the cold with his wool blanket as he watched a serial killer documentary. Those always relaxed him, sometimes, even to the point of wishing he was alive when the murders happened, so he could be the one to break the case.

The doorbell rang.

Will paused his documentary and put his slippers on to walk to the door. He opened it just enough to tell who it was above the chain.

It was a teenage boy wearing a red cap and a matching polo shirt. The only thing protecting him from the wind was a jean jacket.

"Yes?" Will asked.

"I have a delivery for Will Graham?"

"I didn't order anything."

"Oh, the person who ordered left you a note," the boy said as he got a huge pizza out of a thermal bag. The pizza box had a little piece of paper taped to it.

Will's heart picked up. "What?"

"It's already been paid, too. You just have to sign here," the boy handed Will a tablet.

Will signed his name in rushed calligraphy and bid the boy good night.

After he closed the door, the sole smell of Pupatella's fresh pepperoni made his stomach growl. He unstuck the durex from the note and opened it.

It was a ripped page from a book Will didn't immediately recognize. One particular paragraph had been underlined with what looked like an ink pen. It read:

"If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it."

It was difficult to form an opinion on Dr. Lecter. He was over the top with his way to care for Will, in a way a hawk would be, but he was always so *attentive* to details and adamant about personalizing this care that Will couldn't help but glow under his spotlight, even though he had never asked for it.

While Will savored his pizza and eagerly licked the grease out of his fingers, his phone was ringing upstairs, incessantly. To Jack Crawford's mischance, Will fell asleep on the couch, dreaming of aged mozzarella and of the universe turning into a mighty stranger.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading it! If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. I hope you have a wonderful week. All my love.

Broken Phoenix

Chapter Notes

Hello! I'm alive!

Thank you to Mark for beta reading this for me. You're amazing.

I hope you guys enjoy this chapter. As always, be mindful of the tags.

Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Through weary eyes, Will checked his phone and saw it wasn't much after 5 AM. The black-treacle sky was nothing like the peaceful gray one Will loved so much. Instead, it was only making him gloomy and choleric. His ride with Jack to the crime scene had been accompanied by nausea, worry and loneliness—and so much anxiety.

It was the very first time Will's omega nose picked up a scent even from a decent distance. The rotten smell of burnt flesh made him want to puke and, even though the victim's face was completely carbonized, Will had already recognized her petite frame and blonde hair.

Olivia Johnson was young, she had plans to wed, she enjoyed expensive wine and strolls around her neighborhood. None of that mattered to the swarm of bodies around her, taking photographs and illuminating her butchered body without mercy, akin to a swarm of locusts, descending upon their helpless prey with bottomless hunger.

Will recognized her fiancé, Arthur, sobbing outside the police yellow tape. The tall, burly man was completely reduced to grief and terror. His hands were shaking as he tried to dry his stubborn tears, asking for information frantically, but being ignored.

"Will?" Jack called out for him, and only then did Will realize he had zoned out.

"There's– there's a tear in her abdomen," said Will, still looking at Arthur.

"What?"

Will turned his neck back to Olivia. It was difficult to see the incision, because her skin was white, charred, and even leathery due to the third-degree burns, but it was definitely there.

"Someone cut her open," Will explained. "And it doesn't look post-mortem."

For the first time since he arrived, Will unfocused from Olivia's body and paid attention to the surroundings. She was tied up to a tree, a sycamore, if Will's childhood memories served

him well. He remembered having a huge sycamore in his backyard in Louisiana, where his father installed a swing for him.

The arsonist had been kind enough to leave her in her underwear, the only glimpse of dignity she had been spared.

Will sat on the grass and closed his eyes. Even with the overlap of sounds in his ear, he was able to teleport to his limbo room.

The limbo room had always made Will feel both safe and alert, though he only had access to it during crime scenes or extremely stressful personal situations. It was spacious, with pristine white walls and a dark wooden floor—spotless as a newly-minted coin. There was a warm glow illuminating him, though he could never tell where it was coming from, since there were no windows or skylights.

The room itself was always completely empty, the lack of furniture leaving a bitter taste of absence in Will's mouth. Though, it was precisely the utter emptiness that allowed his mind to wander freely, completely unencumbered by distractions or futilities.

Its deafening silence was occasionally disrupted by a gentle rustle of leaves or birds chirping in the distance, but nothing more than that. Most of the time, the silence was sepulchral.

The grass of the real world was pricking Will's palms, insistent like a million tiny daggers, which made ignoring the reruns of the incident an arduous task.

Will used to be better than this. He used to concentrate with the snap of a finger.

In a desperate attempt to commit to the limbo, he pulled his hands away from the grass and settled them on his lap, fiddling with his torn cuticles.

The spacious room was swallowing Will whole, but he always had felt completely free when that happened, or that's what it had been like in the past. This time around, he searched for the answers, for a clue, for an overlooked detail, but his anxiety was so crippling that he was seeing spots in his vision.

Reddish, silvery, shimmering spots polluting his physical and mental view.

And then… in the middle of the room, a table appeared. It was made of well-varnished wood, and its legs looked sturdy. Will traced his gaze from the floor to the content on the table.

Carefully, he approached it. His steps were slow, but firm and never hesitant.

On the table, there was a bottle of wine. The label bore a beautiful emblem against a backdrop of elegant typography. The deep ruby hue of the liquid was visible even through the glass of the bottle.

Will picked the bottle up and immediately smelled the fusion of aromas it exuded—dark fruits, cedar, and hints of spices he couldn't identify. He noticed a golden corkscrew next to it, and decided to open it and serve himself.

There were no glasses, so Will just took the brim of the bottle to his thirsty lips. He drank from it voraciously, his movements borderline frenzied as he swallowed gulp after gulp.

It tasted like blackberries. Cassis. Vanilla. Tobacco.

The pungency of the alcohol burned his esophagus like a sterile desert.

Ripe grapefruit.

Will interrupted his manic drinking and placed the bottle in front of him so he could read it, but the label looked faded, as if someone had downed it in water.

He placed the bottle back on the table, but it turned into an organ. It was the size of a fist and it had a dark, spongy texture to it. Will didn't remember enough from his anatomy classes to identify it, and the fact that it looked as if someone had bitten a piece from it was only making him fuss further.

Will opened his eyes. The grass was back, prickling through the fabric of his jeans. Olivia was still dead. The acidity of the wine was no longer churning his insides, but the grapefruit scent was still hovering in the air.

"Will."

The scent was overwhelming and so was the grass. The voice calling out Will's name was distant, echoing as if he was gravitating in outer space.

"Will. Are you listening? How are you doing?"

Will's head snapped up to find Jack hovering above him with a worried look on his face.

"I… have a migraine," Will didn't lie. The spots were still glimmering around the edges of his eyes.

Jack hummed and swallowed dryly. "What do you have for me?"

"Not much. We should wait for the autopsy before I say anything."

"Will–"

"Why don't you ask Price and Zeller? You were very adamant about prioritizing their opinions over mine," Will knew he sounded bitter. He felt like his mouth was full of ashes, but he couldn't help himself.

Jack sighed and ran a sweaty hand over his bald head. "I called you even though you asked for time off. I honored your wish to be involved. To contribute to the investigation. You're my most valuable asset. I need you, Will."

"Do you?" Will sounded spiteful.

Jack nodded wistfully. "What are your impressions?"

Will looked back at Olivia's corpse and zeroed his eyes on the large incision on her abdomen. Even from afar, it looked like a perfectly clean cut, characterized by its sharpness, precision, and no ragged or uneven edges.

"We should keep our eyes peeled for missing organs," was the only thing Will said as he felt his stomach turn.

"Organs?"

"And… wine. She was out buying wine."

"Do you believe she could've been intoxicated?"

"Irrelevant."

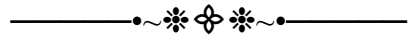
"Are you considering a sexual crime?"

"No, no," Will was quick to shake his head. "I suggest we take her to be autopsied as soon as possible."

Jack mumbled something in agreement, but Will could only listen to the loud sobs flowing out of Arthur's mouth.

"And get her fiancé out of here," Will barked. "Talk to him, answer his questions, and get him out of here. Have some fucking empathy for once."

He left the scene before he could see the outcome of his request. He took an aspirin, and went back home.



Will had just had some pomodoro pasta, and the memory of Dr. Lecter telling Will he should eat more protein echoed in his head. It seemed that, every day that passed, the doctor's impressions and opinions grew with importance.

After eating and doing the dishes, he busied himself with making fishing lures. For this particular one, Will chose iridescent feathers he had gotten from a rooster a while back. They had beautiful hues of golden brown and olive green, which were perfect to mimic the colors of aquatic insects in trout waters.

Will stripped away the excess fluff and barbs, trying his very best to leave only the vibrant strands. He tied the feathers to a curved hook with fine silk threads, attempting to copy a mayfly nymph.

He admired his work, quite pleased with it.

The weather was, fortunately, getting a bit warmer, so all of his dogs were playing outside in the mud. Will had the whole house to himself, so he could enjoy some alone time and unwind.

Even so, the only thing playing on loop in his head was the horrifying sight of Olivia's skin, a literal patchwork of destruction.

Will checked his phone to see if Jack or anyone had any updates on her case, but no avail. He had no messages at all, not even from Beverly or Dr. Lecter. For some reason, his phone felt unusually hot against his palm, even though it had been on his nightstand all afternoon, shielded from the sun. It felt like a branding iron, a blast furnace, so Will closed all the open apps and put it on airplane mode.

He decided to go outside and sit by the pond, put his ankles in the water, something he had been doing since he was a child, to escape the heat.

Harley and Zoe cozied up to his side, and Will petted their muddy fur as he felt the soft skimming of fish schools on the soles of his feet.

"Did you have a good time digging?" Will cooed at the dogs as he dreaded the thorough shower he would have to give them.

Will felt so relaxed he got light-headed, so he lay on the grass and fell asleep there, ankles still in the water.

Later that week, Dr. Lecter welcomed Will into his office once again. They sat opposite each other, as usual, and Will waited for the doctor to initiate the appointment.

Fortunately for Will, that's exactly what happened.

"So, Will. How has life been treating you?"

Will sighed and rolled his eyes. "I feel like my brain packed its bags and went on vacation without my permission. That it left me here to rot."

"And where did it go?" Dr. Lecter asked gently, a hint of amusement tugging on the corners of his plump lips.

"God only knows. To the Maldives, maybe. It's sunbathing its gyri and sulci and sipping on a vodka cocktail or something."

"Care to explain why you feel that way?"

"I'm losing my fucking marbles. I.. have this *thing*."

"Thing?"

"I can teleport to an empty room. In stressful situations. I do it at crime scenes. It helps me see things more clearly most of the time."

"Since when have you been able to do that?"

“Mm. Since my dad beat up my mom for the first time, I think. But it’s not something I’d like to get into right now, if that’s okay.”

Dr. Lecter hummed. “I see. It’s your appointment, Will, you’re the rule maker. What happened this time around?”

Will shrugged. “I had a really negative experience with it this week.”

“Why was it negative?”

“My visions made me scared and uneasy. I saw things I wish I hadn’t seen. It was as if I had no control of the room for the first time in forever. I felt… anxious. Trapped. Watched. Surveilled.”

“You often give me vague answers, even to very specific questions, Will. Do you wish to expand on the matter and tell me about the visions?”

Will seemed to think for a while. “No. I have the stress tolerance of a toothpick, it seems.”

“You work a stressful job, but you’ve never had problems with it so far. Or have you?”

“I used to be better. At work, at life, at managing my emotions. Before, you know. Before the incident.”

“That does not surprise me. But you did say it hadn’t affected you at all. I wrote it down. What changed?”

Will loathed that Dr. Lecter seemed to be able to read him like he was see-through, that he often knew things about Will before he even considered them himself.

Before he could reply, Dr. Lecter spoke up again. “You’re empathetic to a fault, but it seems you often disregard your own vulnerability. You may think everyone’s allowed to experience it and even dwell in it. Grow from it, become elevated. Everyone else. Everyone but you.”

Will found himself staring at the window again. “I really do need to eat more protein,” he said in a meek whisper.

“Will.”

It took Will a few seconds to turn his gaze back to the doctor, but he did, begrudgingly.

“Dr. Lecter,” he replied with the very same cadence.

“What did you have for breakfast today?”

“Coffee.”

“What else?”

“That’s all. Dark coffee with grated cinnamon. I know what you’re going to say, but you’re not my father. You’re not my coworker. You’re not even my friend. You don’t get the right to have this kind of access to me.”

“You’re correct and within your rights as a patient to establish these boundaries, Will. But I *am* your doctor, and we both know a deficient diet can mimic important psychiatric symptoms. I’m simply trying to smooth out your rough edges. But it’s difficult when you’re purposefully roughening them.”

Will felt angry that Dr. Lecter constantly made him feel naive or stupid in a way that he couldn’t even back up his own opinions or limits. And the fact that, even from across the room, Will could smell the grapefruit on him didn’t make it easier.

It was awfully distracting.

Will kept thinking of the bottle of wine. And the mysterious organ on the table. And the cut on Olivia’s body. Her burnt skin. The desperate sobs coming from Arthur’s throat. All of the disturbing memories were mixed with random fragments—the black umbrella, how Pupatella thoroughly baked their pizzas, Ellie’s muzzle dirty with blood.

The incident.

Will’s palms sinking into the grass with such strength that he was chilly from the coldness of the dew drops. How his back was hurting from how hard he was arching it—presenting himself as if he didn’t treasure his dignity or his professional reputation at all. The memory of his pants being completely soaked with arousal, the thick jeans sticking to the inside of his thighs.

“Will. Why are you crying?” Dr. Lecter’s voice brought Will back to the present.

Will was quick to clean his face with nervous palms. He realized he not only hated crying, but he specifically hated crying in front of Dr. Lecter.

“My thoughts are jumping through hoops, that’s all,” he tried to be as honest as he could without falling deeper into the rabbit hole of despair.

“Mm, the mind’s acrobatics,” Dr. Lecter said as he got up to hand Will a box of tissues.

Will ignored his act of kindness long enough that the doctor gave up and placed the tissues on the table instead.

“I need… a safety net,” Will begged. He didn’t mean to sound so lost and pedantic.

“I understand. And I agree. What kind did you think of?”

“I haven’t been completely honest with you. Or with myself, for that matter.”

Dr. Lecter squinted just slightly and Will got goosebumps down his spine. Will felt examined under the doctor’s moonish maroon eyes, like he had been put under a microscope to have each detail of his life magnified and scrutinized.

Will continued before he lost his momentum of courage, “I have a Xanax addiction. And I relapsed on alcohol. I’m not exactly happy about the thought of needing to be medicated, but I’d be willing to do it, if that’s what you thought was best.”

“Will, I value your honesty more than you realize. However, I don’t believe commencing a psychotropic treatment is the optimal choice for you at the moment. I *have* been contemplating changing your suppressants, though.”

“My suppressants?”

The doctor nodded, “Up the dosage to optimize your appetite and enhance the quality of your sleep. And ensure it doesn’t induce headaches as frequently.”

Will opened his mouth to contest, but Dr. Lecter preempted him, “I’ve noticed you take aspirins like they’re candy. It’s not conducive to your stomach, particularly considering it’s an omega stomach.”

Will huffed and crossed his arms. “I’m not sure this would be a good idea.”

“Very well. Let’s be practical and analyze it. Would you say you’re content?”

“What?”

“Are you, Will?”

“No?”

“In the absence of Xanax, does invigorating sleep grace your nights at all?”

“No…”

“What about appetite, migraines and fatigue?”

“Dr. Lecter…”

“Allow me to help you, Will. I’m positive there’s so much I can do for you,” the doctor’s eyes glimmered. “We have to walk that mile. Be a little courageous,” his lips hinted at a smile. “And start on that corticoid tapering.”

Will left the appointment with a brand new prescription of 35 mg of ethinyl estradiol and 1 mg of norethindrone. He had no clue what those meant, and Dr. Lecter had specifically instructed Will to have it filled at a private compounding pharmacy, one he recommended to all of his patients.

On his way home, Will stared at the prescription like his eyes could burn holes in it. It was a rather dim-witted decision in hindsight, to let someone change his whole hormone therapy after only a few sessions. But Dr. Lecter had made some fair points. Will wasn’t happy. He wasn’t feeling good in his body. And stuffing himself with corticoids hadn’t been wise either —Will could already see the damage in how his face was considerably fuller, a consequence of his recent weight gain and fluid retention. He felt exhausted and miserable all the time.

After he fed his dogs and had his usual scorching shower, Will cooked himself a steak with brown rice and Brussels sprouts. Dr. Lecter wasn't there to congratulate him on making better nutritional choices, of course, but Will could almost hear the alpha's foreign accent in his head, praising him. Will felt influenced.

Watched.

Surveilled.

And he wasn't sure why he enjoyed it.

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. I hope you have a wonderful week.
All my love!

Deer Hunter

Chapter Notes

> I have risen from the dead. This chapter is a bit shorter than all the others, but I think a lot happens in fewer words.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was still one of the only people he knew who kept a mechanical clock on his wall.

Tick-tock.

He was asleep when he felt a canine lick on his left thumb, which was hanging out of the bed, as it always did. The room smelled like dog shampoo and Will's own pheromones—heliotrope, pineapple and red berries, burning his nostrils familiarly.

He stirred in bed, eyes still shut, feeling his naked body a bit sweatier than usual, despite the lack of bed sheets covering it.

Tick-tock.

He inhaled it all unconsciously and switched positions. Could it be morning already? There was a timid lightbeam invading Will's weary and heavy eyes, but his curtains were still closed, so he wasn't sure.

As he struggled to wake, he reached out for his phone on the nightstand to check for messages. Before he could unlock the screen, a figure on his peripheral vision brought him to a halt.

At first, Will wasn't sure what it was. It was huge and blurry, as if a kid had stained their drawing with grape juice.

Will sat up, with his phone still tightly clutched in his sweaty palm, and blinked a few times to try and distinguish the image before him. His heart was beating as fast as a runaway train.

Long, long, long legs. Four of them, too. Muscular body covered by reddish-brown fur, which was dirty with mud and what looked like swamp water. Slender neck.

Tick.

Tock.

Will's gaze landed on a humongous pair of antlers, branching out from the deer's head so dramatically that they occupied most of Will's bedroom.

Will screamed, but no sound came out of him.

He woke up, for good this time, with his phone still in hand and Max looking at him as if he had just seen a ghost.

“Fuck. Fuck,” he muttered as he tried to even out his breath.

He wasn’t sure how it happened or what his thought process was but, two seconds later, he heard that comforting, deep, rumbling voice on the other side of the line.

“Good morning, Will. Up so soon?” Dr. Lecter asked, his throat particularly dry from lack of use.

“Is it— is it morning?”

“It’s… three past four.”

“Fuck,” Will found himself repeating his words, as if he was too stunned to use new ones.

“Will…”

“I’m sorry. Sorry.”

“You sound aggravated,” Dr. Lecter’s voice was sweet and sounded like a coo to a scared child. “How are you feeling?”

Will took a deep breath and sighed as if he was Atlas carrying the world on his back before he spoke up, “I had… a nightmare, I think.”

Dr. Lecter hummed in understanding. “What would you feel comfortable telling me about it?”

“I keep thinking of red wine and… juice stains,” he sounded embarrassed about admitting it, only realizing how ridiculous it sounded after the thoughts had already been revealed to the doctor. “It was… on Olivia’s report—” he stopped when he realized he may have been revealing classified information. “You’re not really supposed to know about that,” he said, a little more sour than intended.

“That’s perfectly fine. Feel free to tell me only what you deem necessary.”

Silence on both ends of the line.

Will spoke up, “Were you awake?”

“I suppose you’ve called to tell me about your nighttime reveries and not to know about mine, hm?” Dr. Lecter sounded amused and that stirred hatred in Will’s gut.

“I’m just asking. Why would a psychiatrist be awake at four AM?”

The doctor chuckled. “Why would a profiler?”

“I’m actually considering quitting,” Will revealed, something he wasn’t even aware of himself. “And pursuing an academic career instead.”

“What has led you to this decision?”

“I enjoy teaching. And reading. Seeing fresh corpses and dealing with the smell of formaldehyde stinking up my nostrils? Not so much,” Will sighed.

“I see. I imagine your heart is beating fast. You ought to stop fidgeting, just for a second. Focus on your breathing,” the doctor instructed.

Only then did Will realize he had been fidgeting with a bed sheet thread with his free hand. His cheeks blushed and he retrieved his hand to his lap.

“Thank you,” he whispered into the phone as he closed his eyes and rested his tense back against the headboard. By then, all of his dogs were circling his bed.

“What usually calms you down?” Dr. Lecter asked. “Fishing at this time of the night, well, morning, isn’t ideal.”

Will huffed and rubbed his hand across his face dramatically. “Alcohol,” he answered truthfully. “Whiskey and Jägermeister. Or perfume and hand sanitizer sometimes.”

“Very well, Will. I appreciate the honesty. I’ll write you a prescription for Diazepam so you can take it for the next four weeks. I can e-mail it to you as soon as we hang up.”

The idea of Dr. Lecter hanging up on him made Will’s chest tighten and he reached out for the sheet thread to fiddle with it again. “I… I’m taking the suppressants you’ve prescribed.”

“Good. Do the migraines and fatigue feel any better?”

“Yes, actually. They do.”

“Is there anything else you need me to assist you with?” Dr. Lecter asked gently, his voice slow like molasses.

Tick.

Tock.

“Uhh,” Will mumbled before he licked his lips, his heart rate picking up again like a revving engine.

“Will.” An encouragement that most sounded like an invitation to jump off of a cliff. To dive into frozen waters and deliberately let them drain the heat out of one’s body until it became nothing but a floating carcass.

Either way, Will still mustered enough courage to fight against the paranoia to ask exactly what he wanted.

“Would it be wrong if I asked you to come over?”

“Not wrong,” Dr. Lecter reassured him. “However, I have it on my notes that it’s the exact opposite of what you told me you wanted from this therapeutic relationship.”

“Fuck your notes. I’m liable. And volatile.”

“So I’ve noticed… my long-tailed cat.”

“I’m not your cat. Or anyone else’s.”

“But you are. Can’t you see there are rocking chairs all over?”

Will hummed, not agreeing nor arguing, and lay on his side to clutch his knees flush to his chest. He covered his naked body with his shabby bed sheet. Hearing Dr. Lecter speaking in riddles was idyllically therapeutic to him.

“Please?” he whispered so meekly that he was afraid the doctor hadn’t heard it.

“No need for pedantry, now. I already have the car keys.”

Will allowed himself the luxury of a subtle smile. “Can I ask for something else?”

“It depends.”

“Can you not wear one of your suits? It’s… hard for me to talk to you when you’re wearing them.”

“No problem. What would you like us to talk about when I arrive?”

“Want to be with you alone. Talk about politics. And culture. Food. Space. Global warming. I’m a small glass, but I’d be willing to make some extra room for… all that you have to offer,” Will couldn’t believe the desperation of his own words, but it was as if Dr. Lecter was the master puppeteer in his brain whenever they talked.

The doctor let out a short, satisfied chuckle before he said, “I’ll see you in twenty,” and hung up.

Tick-tock.

Suddenly, the deafening noise of the clock sounded like the imminence of something good.

———•~❊✧❊~•———

Will got dressed in some sweatpants and an old Willie Nelson t-shirt and coiled up by the fireplace with his dogs to wait. His left leg wouldn’t stop bouncing, but the weariness that used to weigh his bones down was mostly gone, and Will wondered if that was due to the change the doctor had made in his suppressant dose.

The doorbell rang and Will got up to answer it.

When he opened the door, he found Dr. Lecter clad in a magenta sweater and tailored brown pants. He had a paper bag in his hands, and his beautiful white Bentley behind him didn't go unnoticed either. It looked like a square peg in a round hole, parked in Will's rural neighborhood, standing out as a sore thumb.

"Good morning," the doctor smiled.

Will felt the immediate huff of ripe grapefruit coming from Dr. Lecter's neck, mouth, wrists. He thought of the organ, a chunk missing, and of the bottle of Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia.

"What do you have in there?" his eyebrows motioned to the paper bag.

"Ham and potato soup. And coffee, freshly-brewed," Dr. Lecter answered as he made his way into Will's home in confident, smooth strides, like a swan on the water.

"For me?"

That seemed to confuse the doctor deeply. He looked up with knitted eyebrows and a slight pout on his plump lips.

"Well, of course," he replied after a beat.

The two of them sat by the fireplace to eat.

Will yawned quite dramatically as he watched the doctor remove the contents from the paper bag. He had brought a teal ceramic two-piece Le Creuset casserole set and a thermal mug with two cups. Will found himself transfixed by the dexterity of Dr. Lecter's hands, lulled by a sleepy haze.

"Your hands… they move differently," he observed.

"Hm? The hand is the visible part of the brain."

"It is."

"I used to be a plastic surgeon."

Will let out a little 'ah,' realizing it did make sense.

When Dr. Lecter finished serving the two of them, he said, "The only difference between a surgeon and a butcher lies solely in the precision of the cut."

Will huffed humorously. Then, his stomach growled at the fragrance of the food before him.

"Ah, yes. Sweet borborygmi," the doctor smiled.

"What?"

"The sound your body has just made. The anticipation for hunger. A beautiful noise. Go ahead. Feast," Dr. Lecter said as he handed Will one of the silver spoons.

Will dove into the casserole pot, not trying to mask his eagerness, and had a spoonful of the soup. His omega body relished pleasure as the warmth took over his spine and, the exquisite ham flavor, his taste buds. Its texture provided a chewy, but yielding mouthfeel. Borderlining on spongy.

“Hmm…” he licked his lips in approval as his expression lit up.

“Good?”

“The ham is so soft. And smoky. I don’t think I’ve ever had meat this good before.”

Dr. Lecter beamed as he drank from his coffee, his dark eyes glimmering above the brim of the cup.

They ate mostly in silence as the wind howled outside. Will’s mouth was salivating at the taste of ham and English potatoes as he tried to avert his eyes from Dr. Lecter’s watchful ones.

“You’re not serving as a consultant on the Olivia Johnson case, are you? I didn’t see you at the scene,” Will spoke up with his mouth still half-full, unable to wait.

The doctor reached out for his napkin to wipe the corners of his mouth. Will thought it was an act to buy him more time to think what he should answer.

“I’m aware you’re *not* working the Olivia case. Not officially. This information is out of your jurisdiction, isn’t it?” Dr. Lecter asked.

Will’s jaw was slack as he didn’t even try to hide how shocked he was.

“Dr. Lecter, that was quite mean.”

The doctor laughed, really laughed. Will thought it was the very first time he was watching him actually laugh, his voice going even as far as an octave lower, raspier, heavier, huskier, as the laugh erupted from his throat, whirling up to his mouth and into the air around them like a wind storm.

“Hannibal,” Dr. Lecter said once he collected himself. “We should be on first-name basis if I’m bringing you breakfast.”

Will hummed and said, “You’ve been… bringing me lots of things lately.”

“Oh. That. I suppose you had preferred not to acknowledge it.”

Will shrugged, but his red cheeks were betraying his standoffishness. “I don’t know what to do with it. I’m not sure what it means. It’s confusing and borderlining invasive. And I can’t honestly tell whether I feel preyed on or taken care of. Not that the former is a negative thing. It’s just… unprecedented. And it feels… alien. Foreign.” He stopped and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Fuck. I didn’t mean to blurt it out like this. Vomit it on you like this.”

Hannibal had a subtle smile on, like the landing of a butterfly on a cotton field. Will felt eviscerated and laid out on an operation table—worst of all, deliberately.

“That’s not an issue,” Hannibal reassured him, gentle as a feather. “Listening is my line of work. And I’m more than glad to clarify what my intentions are, if that’s what you’d like,” he offered.

Will didn’t reply, but he did raise his eyebrows in expectation.

“I’d like to know you better,” was all Hannibal said.

“But… that’s not all there is. Is it? Are you trying to play with my head like all the other psychiatrists that came before you?”

“Not at all,” Hannibal sounded mildly offended. “You’re… lonely. Are you not?”

Will let out a small sigh. “I am.”

“Very well. I’d like to make life easier for you. Open up the blinds of your dark room. That’s all there is,” Hannibal smiled before taking a spoonful of soup to his own mouth.

There was a familiar warmth swimming in Will’s gut, and he knew it wasn’t the soup’s doing.

They finished their meal and spent the rest of the day watching ‘The Night Stalker,’ Will’s pick, of course. Every now and then, the outside of their thighs brushed together and Will got electrified. They never got any closer than that, though. Will fell asleep with his heavy head on Hannibal’s shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading it. Happy New Year!

Bitter Grape Juice

Chapter Notes

> Hi! This chapter has some important dialogue and even more important revelations. Let me know what you think!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It shouldn't have happened as it did, Will figured. His days were going back to being blended into one another, though the Diazepam he was taking was helping considerably with the alcoholism. His urge to drink every night wasn't that pressing anymore, to the point where he would only do it every other day.

His body was more alert, too. The migraines were mostly gone, and he felt more awake and energetic. Even though he thought most of it was due to his suppressant dose change, there had also been a shift in perspective for him, which made his outlook a bit more positive.

But his mother's death anniversary was coming up. And the insomniac nights were getting worse. Will was trying his best to not retort to Dr. Lecter—Hannibal, now that they were on first-name basis—for every minimal sign of emotional discomfort he felt, but it proved to be a more difficult task than he had anticipated, for Hannibal was able to provide him solace every single time Will reached out.

Which is why Will was on his way to an emergency appointment.

His hands were clammy and shaky, and he had no idea how he was going to speak about it, but he had to try. All of his growth so far had been with and through Hannibal, so it was only natural that he trusted him as his psychiatrist.

Perhaps, even as a new friend. But that was something Will would have to access later.

Before Will could even knock on the door, it opened. There, by the jamb, Hannibal stood with a crooked smile, dressed in a gray knitted sweater.

"Good evening, Will. Please, come in," Hannibal smiled as he stepped out of the way for Will to pass through.

Nervously, Will obliged. He made his way to his seat, but couldn't bring himself to relax and actually sit down.

"Tomorrow marks the 10th anniversary of my mother's death," he blurted out, surprised by his inability to be more articulate and eloquent.

Hannibal didn't sit down either.

“I understand. What kind of emotions does it bring?” he asked, his voice smooth like velvet.

Will thought Hannibal might’ve been using his alpha voice on him, but he couldn’t bring himself to confront him. The comfortable warmth that was tingling on the bristling hairs of Will’s nape was enough to forgive such a transgressive act.

“I’m sorry. Should we sit down?” Will asked instead.

“I see you’re still retorting questions as a defense mechanism. This is your appointment. You aren’t obligated to sit down.”

“I’m not?” Will’s voice broke.

“As I’ve said before, you’re the rule maker.”

Will let out a shaky sigh. “Well, I’m too hyper. But you can sit, if you want.”

“A practitioner and their receiver of care must always be on the same eye level. For both Freudian and politeness purposes. If you stand, so do I.”

Will felt incredibly intimidated by his doctor choosing to stand. So, of course, he sat down as quickly as he could.

The doctor stood for a few seconds, perhaps waiting to see if Will would get back up. Then, he sat down opposite him and crossed his long, spidery legs.

Will felt like prey in his web in more ways than one.

“She… well, my dad, he went into rut after my mom arrived from the grocery store. I think it was because she was sweaty, so her pheromone glands were all over the place? I don’t know,” Will sighed.

Hannibal said nothing nor expressed any emotions. Will was starting to recognize some clear signs of psychoanalysis in Hannibal’s approach. The echoing silence and the resolute determination of allowing your patient to get to their conclusions by themselves were very characteristic of it, or so Will had learnt during his criminology degree.

He didn’t break under it, he just bent.

“He went at it too hard… and he fucking killed her. It was an accident, I think. That’s what the autopsy said anyway. I don’t believe my dad could ever hurt my mom on purpose, but she was small and frail, and could never stand up for herself.”

Hannibal nodded once before he said, “Do you know your father’s whereabouts, Will?”

“Oh, he’s six feet under in the Acadia Parish. He committed suicide as soon as he realized what he had done. I got home from college and saw his brains on the floor… like scrambled eggs with ketchup. And my poor mom…” Will can’t help needing to stop for a breath. “No dignity had been spared.”

“Have you ever talked to anyone about this before?” Hannibal asked.

“No. The police tried to get me into therapy for it, but I turned it down. I was already of age, so I had the right to do as I pleased.”

“Do you regret this decision?”

Will’s lips puckered as he considered the question. “No. No, I don’t. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be here with you… opening up like this.”

“Can you specify what’s positive about it to you?”

“Mmm. It’s as if it doesn’t even hurt,” Will admitted. “Well, it does hurt. The fact the past is unchangeable certainly does, but talking about it doesn’t. It’s… easy with you.”

“I’m glad I can provide you with any kind of solace, Will. Our bond is strengthening more and more.”

Will smiled just slightly before he added, “I appreciate the outfit change.” He remembered telling Hannibal he felt intimidated by his suits, so the sweater couldn’t be a mere coincidence. Will’s cheeks bloomed with the realization.

“I must admit I’ve thought long about what color wouldn’t clash with yours. Your eyes are as bright as an underwater beacon… an aquamarine daybreak. And you’re often dressed in flannel and heavy coats. I had to underdress for you,” Hannibal mirrored Will’s smile.

Because Will wasn’t used to compliments whatsoever, he just licked his lips unconsciously and averted his eyes.

It was Hannibal who pushed him with, “How have your migraines been?”

“Oh, good. I barely get them now. Except when I’m driving. Then, it’s hell.”

“I can drive you. That’s not an issue. Are you headed to Wolf Trap afterwards?”

“Uh, I was actually going to Beverly’s for the night. We’re going to spend some much-needed time together.”

Hannibal’s plump lips hardened into a line. “I wasn’t aware you and Miss Katz were this intimate with each other. Would you like to talk about it?”

“God, no. She’s just a very good friend… that’s all. And the fact we work the same job makes us connect in a way I can’t with other people. Beverly is a very nice person. She really has my back.”

Hannibal hummed in acknowledgment. He uncrossed his legs.

“How has it been with the alcohol?” he asked.

“Better, too. I haven’t been resorting to household products. And I’m only drinking on Tuesdays and Thursdays now. It’s almost suspicious how everything has improved during the last few weeks,” Will said, though he had a satisfied grin on his face.

“A thorough doctor seldom leaves their receiver of care lacking,” Hannibal explained.

“I’m not just your ‘receiver of care,’” Will made air quotes. “We’re past this, right?”

“It depends on what you’d prefer it to be. Last time I checked, you explicitly said my notes weren’t that reliable when they came to you. Do you wish to reconsider?”

“I stand by what I said. But we’re acquaintances, you and I. Are we not?”

“The label of our therapeutic relationship is completely up to you, Will. It’s not up to me at all.”

Will was quiet for a few moments. “What if I want it to be up to you, too? Can’t you tell me your perspective? Or is that against your lousy therapeutic rules?”

“It’s, as I’ve previously said, my duty to make life easier for you. Open up the blinds of your dark room,” Hannibal repeated what he said the other day, word by word. That unnerved Will for reasons he couldn’t quite explain—as if everything was rehearsed.

Will opened his mouth to speak, but Hannibal cut him out with, “And it seems I’m succeeding. That ought to be enough.”

“Well, it’s not. I want us to talk about the elephant in the room.”

“Which is?”

“The fact that you’ve been… I don’t even know the term for it, but… *courting* me, I guess. Like a couple thing.” His voice lowered two octaves when he added, as an afterthought, “An alpha and omega thing.”

Hannibal’s expression was unreadable as he said, “We are alpha and omega,” plain and simple.

“This isn’t the 19th century, Hannibal,” Will retorted, even though he could feel the warmth of his blush spreading down his clavicles and chest. “And I don’t date. Ever.”

“I find that hard to believe, Will.”

“Well,” Will scoffed with an overly-dramatic shrug, “it’s the truth.” He hated that his heartbeat was rapid fire at that point.

“If you’d like me to stop my advances, all you have to do is ask.”

“Is that so?”

Hannibal nodded, his hands up in the air in surrender as he promised, “I’ll abort my mission.”

Will averted his eyes and fixed his glasses on the bridge of his nose. He hugged himself and only then did he realize he was shaking like a leaf in the wind.

“And what would your mission entail? Or telling me that also goes against your Freudian rules?”

Hannibal chuckled, “Freud believed that a therapist must maintain a non-negotiable degree of distance from their patient. The boundaries are crucial to avoid transference outside the office setting. I could say I’ve been ignoring Freud for a good while now, when it comes to you.”

Will gulped. He was incredibly sweaty. “So… what’s the goal here?”

“The goal is to win your affection through deserving it.”

Will was flabbergasted. He couldn’t believe his psychiatrist’s words. It was absurd. But what was even more ludicrous was the fact that there were butterflies in Will’s stomach. Hannibal was eyeing him up and down with those Japanese-maple-like pools of maroon. The ripe grapefruit was stronger than ever—was Hannibal doing this on purpose to calm Will down? Or was this a natural reaction to the conversation they were having? Either way, it was intoxicating.

The maroon was everywhere, and Will felt trapped inside a garnet, its glassy walls not allowing any way out.

But there was safety in his heart. His worries were kept at bay. He was drinking less. The migraines were mostly gone. An alpha was courting him and Will didn’t feel like running the opposite direction in full-speed as he normally would.

Safety.

Harbor.

Hannibal Lecter.

Will’s psychiatrist.

“I don’t think I can give you that,” Will mumbled after a beat.

Hannibal was as stoic as ever when he replied, “I understand. I must inquire, however, if that was an implicit request for me to cease my advances?”

Will sighed. A fat drop of sweat made its way down his spine.

“That’s not quite what I’m saying. I’m saying I’m hard to break. I’m… like a rubber band. I can stretch to a certain degree, but I’ll always snap back together. And whoever’s got me in their hands tends to get hurt from the snapping,” he tried to explain.

“That poses no quandary for me whatsoever, Will. Patience is one of my most valuable virtues. And I’m an alpha whose future plans have been very well-architected. Allow me,” Hannibal humbly asked.

Will couldn't muster strength to come up with a reply.

Hannibal raised his finger to excuse himself. He went through his humongous armoire, which had a hidden minibar, and pulled out a bottle of mineral water. After he poured it into a crystal glass, he offered it to Will without saying a word.

Will retrieved the glass as he took the time to curiously run his eyes through Hannibal's armoire, where he found a wine cabinet. All of the bottles were the very same, with the same emblem painted against a backdrop of elegant typography. Will's keen nose picked up the notes of dark fruits, cedar and spices.

"What wine is that?" Will asked. "You seem to like it very much."

"Oh, it's Italian red wine. Wonderful harvest. I'd have offered if you weren't, well, recovering."

"Why don't you pour yourself some?" Will challenged him. He needed to see *more*.

"I wouldn't wish to appear impolite."

"I don't really mind."

"Forgive me, Will. I wouldn't do such a thing in the presence of my favorite patient."

Will squinted. "I'd love to watch you drink it. I think it'd do good, you know, to be so close to it and not be able to have it," he bluffed.

"Have you been reading about other therapeutic approaches?" Hannibal asked as he reached out for the wine and a golden corkscrew.

"I have, yes," Will lied. "I'm really curious about how I can shape myself into a better omega. An efficient man. A skilled profiler. I'm also curious about why you were so reluctant to drink it."

"As you wish, Will." Hannibal uncorked the bottle and poured some into a wine glass—why did he have those at his office? He smelled the glass and sipped from it. The label of the bottle was still turned.

"Turn the bottle, will you?" Will asked.

Hannibal obliged. Slowly.

The compass rose on the aged label left no doubt of what brand it was.

Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia.

Will raised his eyebrows in acknowledgment. He said, "Ah, yes. Good brand, I've heard wonders of it. I… have to go. I feel a bit dizzy and Beverly must be waiting for me."

Hannibal checked his wall clock, "We still have twenty minutes to spare."

“Yeah. But I don’t feel so good. I’ll see you next week, okay?” Will said before he got up and left, leaving no room for Hannibal to answer and *hoping* he felt stupid by opening a bottle of wine on his omega patient’s command.

He drove to Beverly’s house thinking that it should be Hannibal driving him, that Will could’ve let him do that, accepted his offer, if he wasn’t so frail and afraid. If his mother wasn’t dead. If she hadn’t been dead by the hands of an alpha in rut.

———•~❋✣❋~•———

Will was received by one of Beverly’s tightest hugs ever, the ones she reserved for when she knew he was overwhelmed. She rubbed her wrists on the sides of Will’s neck and, even though she was a beta, her faint vanilla scent was enough to calm Will down, thanks to the deep friendship they shared.

They had chocolate cake and glasses of whole milk while they talked about Olivia’s case, Will’s increasing sanity and how flax seeds did a good job of substituting eggs in the cake Beverly made for them.

Hannibal’s name came up eventually.

“How has therapy been?” she asked with a mouthful of cake.

“Good,” Will shrugged, opting not to delve any further into the intricacies of his dynamic with Hannibal. “He’s a good therapist. It’s relatively easy to open up.”

“Mmm. He has a crush on you. And you know that.”

“Maybe. But that’s his problem. It’s his grave he’s digging.”

Beverly laughed as she covered her mouth. “You’re a vile omega, Will. Go out with him, have some fun. What’s the worst that could happen? That he could psychoanalyze you when you decide to separate the bacon bits of your fries? We both know I already do that.”

Will warm-heartedly pushed her shoulder. “Stop,” he muttered between all the cake in his mouth.

Nights with Beverly were always pleasant. It would’ve been another great one for the books, if the bitten organ and the bottle of wine hadn’t come back to haunt Will’s dreams.

Upstairs, while they slept, Jack Crawford was texting Will’s phone to let him know Olivia Johnson was missing her spleen.

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. I love reading them and they make my day.

All my love.

Jaundice

Chapter Notes

> Hellooooo! It's me. This might be my favorite chapter so far, but I don't want to get anyone's hopes up!
>
> Thanks to Nion for beta reading this for me on such short notice.
>
> Happy reading!

“How are you, truly?” Hannibal’s honeyed voice echoed from the other side of the line.

“I’m doing better. I think,” Will sighed, though he had a smile on his lips. “It’s been abnormally warm in Wolf Trap, though,” he mused. “Not even swimming has been relieving me lately.”

He was sitting outside, ankles inside the pond as he felt the fish tickle the soles of his feet. He had Ray-Ban sunglasses on and some watermelon-scented sunscreen on his nose. Winston and Max were sunbathing with him.

“Mmm. I reckon the cold has been quite generous, Will. It’s been storming quite frequently in Baltimore. Daunting winds, as well.”

Will hummed and dried the sweat off his forehead with the back of his hand.

“Is that all you’d like to share?” Hannibal asked after a beat.

Will went quiet. He swayed his legs inside the water, toying with the fish before he whispered, “Someone took Olivia Johnson’s spleen.”

Hannibal hummed. There was shifting on the other side of the line, as if he had switched positions. “Has this affected you at all?”

Will puckered his lips as he scratched between Max’s ears. “Yes. Her fiancé told the inquirers her memory had been bad for a while, too. I wonder if she was being stalked, but didn’t connect the dots.”

“I see. As a profiler, how would you explain it?”

“I don’t think we’re looking at an organ trafficker. Why would someone kill a woman and remove a single organ? I think that, if I were a killer, removing the heart would send a much stronger message. Wouldn’t it? Something about lack of empathy or cruelty. I don’t know. What do you reckon? You know, as a psychiatrist.”

“Hmm. Have you heard of Zang-Fu?”

Will chuckled. “The what?”

“It’s a Chinese medicine concept,” Hannibal supplied. “Each organ is associated with its own emotion, behavior, element and color. Perhaps, the spleen wasn’t an arbitrary choice.”

“Well, fine. And what is the spleen associated with? What is its element?”

“Earth.”

Will remembered the sycamore tree Olivia had been tied to, exactly like the one from his childhood. Some details he hadn’t valued yet came flooding his memory in waves. The vertiginous height of the tree, its dense canopy of branches and abnormally large leaves. All that green and brown in a single brush swatch painted in Will’s brain.

“What else?” he asked with a certain urgency.

“When balanced, it’s associated with worrying.”

“And when it isn’t?”

“When in excess, anxiety and rapid flow of ideas. And when it’s deficient, well… the opposite occurs.”

Will’s jaw fell slack as his synapsis made the connection in an instant. He clutched his cellphone, which was scorching hot, close to his ear, completely in shock.

“Memory loss,” he whispered, more to himself than to Hannibal.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

Will got to work an hour earlier than usual because of his eagerness to read Olivia’s autopsy report.

“Morning, Graham cracker,” Beverly said as soon as she saw him. “You look… surprisingly rested. And somewhat tanned, too.”

Will managed to sketch a half-smile because it was true, he did feel significantly better. “Thanks,” he croaked out. “You should’ve brought me some of your flax seed cake. I would be even happier.”

“We have to work on the surfer’s case. No time for cake.”

Of course there were other cases for Will to work on, but he couldn’t get Olivia’s burnt skin out of his head. He bid Beverly goodbye, got to his desk, turned on his new lamp, and logged into the computer as quickly as possible.

There wasn’t much he understood about pathological findings, so he scrolled down to the conclusion.

Case Number: #972403 — OLIVIA ROSE JOHNSON

DOB: 12/13/1991

Autopsy Findings Summary

Conclusion

Miss Johnson's brain, during neuropathological examination, showed important presence of neurofibrillary tangles and amyloid plaques, associated with brain atrophy, all findings pointing to early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Will opened a new tab on his browser and spent the entirety of his shift reading about Zang-Fu.

He found out the color associated with the spleen was yellow, and that the flavor was sweet. After a few hours, he had learnt more about medicine than during his college years. It was impressive that he didn't have a migraine, probably due to the miraculous change Hannibal had made to Will's suppressants.

It reminded Will to take them, so he reached for his pill box inside his bag. He noticed his water bottle had spilled some into the bag, and that some of his pills had begun to dissolve. The outer layer of the pills had started to soften, now with a slight cloudiness around them. Will pinched one of them with his index and thumb and smelled it, but thought they were still good enough to be taken.

"Will," Jack's voice called out.

Will snapped his head up to focus on Jack's fatherly expression, present more often than not. Will anticipated the man's words before they even left his lips.

"How have you been?" Jack asked.

Will had to resist the urge to roll his eyes because it was one thing to have Hannibal hovering above him like a hawk, because that's what Will was paying him to do, but it was something else entirely to have his boss treat him like a toddler.

"I'm good," was all he said. "Yourself?"

"I'm doing well. But I'm more worried about you. Dr. Lecter told me that, now that your sessions with him have moved out of the Bureau, your well-being is no longer my jurisdiction. I don't have… any kind of access to you anymore."

Will hummed as he tried to hide his joy. He hadn't realized how much he loved hearing that.

"I'll still ask him for a report, though. So I can follow it as closely as possible," Jack added.

That was a bit much, Will realized. He had been on good terms with Hannibal for a while, though, not dreading therapy as fervently as before, and both of them knew Will was doing so much better, both physically and psychologically. He figured an honest report couldn't hurt. In fact, he hoped it would help Jack trust him again with more challenging cases.

"Sure," he said with a certain edge of nonchalance. "Hannibal will be happy to provide you with a report."

Jack's thin, arched eyebrows knitted together. Only then did Will realize he had slipped the doctor's first name into the conversation.

Will tried to cover it up with, "I need to catch up on the surfer's case. But you can call me if you need anything else." He gave Jack a forceful smile and turned his eyes to the computer screen.

"Have you looked into Miss Johnson's autopsy?"

"Just did."

"And?"

Will rolled his chair forward. "And… I don't know why they took her spleen."

Jack's tongue clicked against his front teeth in disapproval. He said, "I know you can give me more than that, Will. You've never lacked in all of your years working for me."

Hannibal's explanation about Zang-Fu rang in Will's ear. The ripe grapefruit and old whiskey smell flooded his brain in warm, calming waves. Hannibal's neat cognac eyes, the depth of the liquidness of them, so very similar to the water Will loved soaking his ankles in.

Soaked.

Marinated.

Drenched.

Will could brush against what he felt when it came to Hannibal, but none of it came close to the way he felt thoroughly immersed, chained to the bottom of those red sea eyes, every time they talked.

"I honestly don't know," Will shrugged. "I need to do some studying on it. Anatomy and all. I haven't been on top of my game lately," he apologized. For some reason, protecting Hannibal's input felt more important than burdening himself with his moribund career as profiler.

He remembered what he had told Hannibal, about wanting to quit and become a teacher. He was still torn by the pros and cons.

Jack lingered by the desk for a few more seconds in complete silence.

“Your desk was almost turning into a pigpen. Good job on cleaning it,” he complimented Will and, not leaving room for a reply, he retreated back to his office.

Will chuckled, deeply immersed in satisfaction.

Drenched.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

“I’m going to fucking kill you! I SWEAR!” Will rampaged as he knocked on Hannibal’s office door, his knuckles on the verge of bleeding from the strength he was using to knock.

He hadn’t scheduled an appointment, and they would only see each other a few days from now, but the circumstances were too alarming to wait.

The door was unlocked and Hannibal stepped out, clad in a three-piece brocade-patterned navy suit. The fact that he wasn’t dressed down, probably because he wasn’t supposed to be meeting Will, made hatred stir even more in the pit of Will’s stomach.

Will hit his closed fists on Hannibal chest over and over as he screamed, “I can’t fucking believe you didn’t fucking clear me for work, you piece of shit!”

Hannibal easily restricted Will’s wrists and held them behind his back.

In a low voice, his accent as thick as a dull blade, he said, “We ought to converse about this in a calm manner. Why don’t you come in?”

Will was still struggling to get out of Hannibal’s hold, but not succeeding. He was so dizzy with hatred that he thought his head might pop at any second. Crumpled in his left hand, there was a copy of the report Hannibal had delivered Jack a few days ago, in which Hannibal recommended that Will should be on medical leave for three months at least, due to ‘crippling psychiatric instability’ and ‘emotional lability.’

Hannibal ushered Will inside the office and forcefully made him sit down at his designated chair. For the first time, Hannibal didn’t sit down, breaking his own rule. Will made a mental note that Hannibal acknowledged he had the upper hand and that he chose to bask in power—a quick conclusion Will made solely from the doctor’s decision to stand.

Will stared at the painting, the big gray wolf growling at the helpless lamb. The semantics were awful. And the room around him was so suffocatingly warm despite the fact he was just wearing a button-down with no other layers on top.

“I’m safeguarding your best interests,” said Hannibal.

“You— you deliberately deceived me. You told me I was doing better. That I had made progress. That– that you and I had a therapeutic bond, whatever that fuck that means.”

“Will, compose yourself. Deep breaths.”

Hannibal took a few steps towards Will and, when he attempted to hold Will's jaw, Will slapped his hand away.

"You're not a trustworthy doctor or a good friend. I— God, forgive me, but I hope you rot in hell," Will managed to mutter in between shivers.

"Your reaction is expected, long-tailed cat."

"Take a long walk at a short pier, fucking douchebag."

Hannibal's composure didn't waver. He continued, "Can you pinpoint where, in your body, is your feeling?"

Will's head was spinning. He whispered, "It's nestled in the middle of my chest. Behind my sternum."

"Good. What is the feeling made of?"

"Scorching metal. It… burns. And melts." Will's eyes were completely closed now, only his stubborn eyelashes fluttering with the need to stay alert.

"What color is it?"

"Amber yellow. Yolk-like yellow. Mustard flower yellow." Will took a deep breath. "Yellow."

Hannibal's lips hinted at a subtle smile. "Excellent."

"God. Fuck. It's so hot in here," Will cursed as he began to unbutton his shirt. His back was damp with sweat and his vision was completely blurred. He felt drunk. He tried standing up, but his legs wobbled like the ones of a newborn colt trying to walk. A ship listing in rough seas.

Hannibal's cognac seas.

Will passed out. Everything went pitch black in a matter of seconds. He didn't hit his head only because Hannibal dexterously held him before he could fall to the floor.

As if he was expecting it to happen.

Desert Flower

Chapter Notes

Double update to make up for my inconsistency! This chapter is... yeah. You'll see.

Thanks to Nion and Shelby for helping me out.

Happy reading!

When Will woke up, it was in a king-sized bed. It took him a few moments to realize the sheets under him were wet and that he was a tad shivery from it. His weary eyes scanned the room and he quickly noted he was in a hotel—a posh one, too, an oasis of luxuries, if he were to go by the elegant seating area, the tasteful art on the walls, and the dim, warm lightning. There was a sole large window and a glass door, which looked like it led to a private balcony.

“Hannibal,” Will muttered rather stupidly as he tried to sit up without success.

His head was heavy and Hannibal was nowhere to be seen. However, the faint scent of grapefruit lingering in the air pointed at Hannibal as having been the culprit for bringing Will to this hotel.

And then, it came. The tingling Will dreaded so much. It started with his clitoris and it buzzed all the way up his body, through his breasts, mouth and nape. It resonated within his worn out bones like an acoustic guitar in an empty cathedral. Will’s heart was thumping because there was no other explanation for what was happening.

Before he knew it, he was presenting himself. He had his ass up in the air, his back completely arched, and his face buried in the silk pillow. Mumbling against it, his haziness was as present as ever.

“Oh, long-tailed cat,” Hannibal’s voice made Will’s ears twitch.

Will tried looking at Hannibal over his shoulder, but his eyes were so blurry that it was difficult to make out the man’s figure.

“Nnnh,” was what tumbled out of Will’s bitten lips.

Hannibal took a few steps towards the bed and placed his large hand on the small of Will’s back, gently pressing his abdomen to the mattress.

“Do not fret. I’ve brought you here so you could take a moment’s reprieve,” he said.

“But— mhm. What about work…”

“You’re on work leave, are you not? Or has this detail eluded your little brain?”

Will was shocked at the roughness of Hannibal’s words, as he had never had the man talk to him this way. He opened his mouth to point it out, but the only thing that came out was a lickerish moan.

“We’re all rooting for your well-being,” Hannibal said as he trailed his hand all the way from Will’s thigh to his shin. “Especially me.”

“Fuck off,” Will grunted, his speech completely slurred, like that of a drunk sailor chewing on marbles.

Hannibal cooed at Will as he went back to the seating area. Will watched over his shoulder as Hannibal dragged the velvet couch closer to the bed and sat on it, with impeccable posture and a wooden cane, whose handle had a snake on it.

Will’s thoughts were still functioning to the point where he thought this was absolutely ludicrous. The word ‘pretentious’ came to mind, a recurrent adjective when it came to describing Hannibal.

Until Hannibal used the cane to spread out Will’s legs, like he was a trash collector using a stick to pick up a discarded can.

Will’s spine electrified with the tingle. His clitoris was swollen and wet inside his underwear, which brought him great shame. He whined like a wounded animal.

“Allow not your heart to be encumbered by trepidation, Will. I’m holding your hand, as I’ve always been,” Hannibal said, using his alpha voice.

Will tried to get out of his pants, but his hands wouldn’t cooperate. The more he tried to pop the button open, the more his fingers slipped.

He heard Hannibal get up from the chair and walk to the bed once again. Gracefully, he began to undress Will, piece by piece. Hannibal’s hands were as hot as a steaming furnace against Will’s sweaty skin, to the point where it burned.

Will was stripped of his pants first, Hannibal sliding the soaked jeans down his thighs and legs. Then, he followed with unbuttoning Will’s shirt and peeling it off his arms. Will’s underwear was nearly plastered to his cunt from all the wetness, which made it harder to take off, but Hannibal managed it balletically enough.

In no time, Will found himself completely naked. He proceeded to rut his swollen clitoris against the bed, mostly involuntarily, but Hannibal was swift to place the cane in the middle of his back to stop him from struggling.

“Quit that nonsense,” Hannibal spat out.

Will wanted to say that he needed cock, that he would die if his heat wasn’t addressed again, but his drooling mouth was working way below his frantic thinking—in fact, it wasn’t working at all.

“You should’ve known about the cornstarch pills, long-tailed cat. About how they banished your migraines and erased your weariness,” Hannibal said before his tongue made a ‘tsk’ sound, as if he was disappointed. “I had presumed your intellect to be of a higher caliber. But, alas…”

All this time, Will had been feeling better because he was off hormone therapy, not because Hannibal had fixed the dosage. He remembered how the pills had no smell at all, and how they were quick to dissolve in water. There was so much hatred in his core that he thought he might suffocate.

Enraged, Will struggled, but managed to turn on his back to face Hannibal properly.

“I fucking hate you,” he slurred out, eyes zeroed in on the cane.

“Your faux words find no purpose in me. What is it you desire? Do you possess the courage to make your needs known?”

“I need… need you to look out for me— if— oh, God. Help me, God. If you don’t want me to die,” he begged, teary-eyed, with his mouth turning into a frown.

“I’d never let harm befall you. Are you blind to my unwavering devotion to you? All of this… it was solely to be under the sunshine of your undivided attention, long-tailed cat,” said Hannibal as he carded Will’s sweaty curls with his long, spidery fingers.

Will whined with desperation, but he knew Hannibal was right—he was obsessed and had never taken the obsession lightly. No, it was a thunderstorm in Will’s life, a blinding clarity in his bleak darkness.

“Hannibal,” Will started, but he wasn’t sure where he wanted his sentence to go.

“I know,” Hannibal cooed as he toyed with the midnight tendrils of Will’s hair.

Will noticed what was about to happen, but he made a prompt decision to allow it. The doctor planted a muted, lingering kiss on Will’s forehead.

“This— this is your fault,” Will sobbed.

“Shut it. We shall navigate these trials together, you and I.”

For better or for worse, Will’s vision was purely flashing lights and zigzag lines as Hannibal talked to him. Will wanted to flounce, but he found no strength in his limp legs. The realization that his psychiatrist was seeing him naked—cunt dripping like a leaky tap, and its coarse pubes completely on display—was enough for him to try and cover his private parts to spare himself some ounce of dignity.

Hannibal pinned Will’s arms to the bed frame before he could, though.

“I cherish every part of you,” Hannibal promised. “So elegant. Fierce. And wild,” he added as he ran the pad of his finger over Will’s glistening clitoris.

Will shivered and his toes curled as he dumbly asked, “Are you going to give me your damn knot or what?”

Hannibal chuckled darkly and his Japanese maple eyes shimmered when he pressed his hand over Will’s ribs.

For a single second lost in time, Will felt like Adam receiving the blessing of God’s holy finger in his viscera. He wanted Hannibal’s godly touch all over him, as much as he loathed admitting it to himself.

He took a moment to realize the hotel room was dark and that the only lights illuminating it were the neons from the streets, washing them in colors through the window. Will connected the dots and guessed they were in Baltimore, most likely. Far away from Will’s home in Wolf Trap.

“My dogs. You left my dogs by themselves, you fucking demon—”

“Miss Katz has undertaken their care while you’re absent, Will.”

Will let out an elongated breath he didn’t know he had been holding, overwhelmed by a wave of solace. His entire frame slackened immediately, shoulders and legs went lax, as he released a portion of his concerns into the ether.

“Tell me you would like me to cease my advances.”

“Mm-m. No.”

“No?” Hannibal grinned.

“I have… needs,” Will slurred out because he was, indeed, besieged by his specific exigencies. “Needs that evade my rationality,” he said, as an afterthought.

“I don’t quite think you’re deserving of what you desire. But I can alleviate your predicament in other ways.”

Hannibal put the cane aside and smiled, looking enthralled by the sight of Will’s cunt out in the open like this. He got in between Will’s legs and placed his knees on each of his own shoulders so he could have unrestricted access.

“Declare your yearning,” Hannibal’s syrupy voice demanded.

Will said nothing and, instead, only grabbed two handfuls of Hannibal’s dark blond hair, like honeyed wheat toasted in the sun. He connected Hannibal’s plump lips to his cunt eagerly.

Hannibal caught his cue and started licking Will’s clitoris in slow, leisurely movements. He was holding Will’s thighs open while they trembled just slightly.

It was difficult for Will to focus on anything other than the overwhelming need to orgasm. The world spun around him like a kaleidoscope of colors, and his body buzzed feverishly like a beehive being provoked.

When Hannibal penetrated Will with an index finger, Will tried staying awake so he could burn the image into his retina, but couldn't. He passed out almost immediately. Behind his eyes, the only things he saw were shadows of Hannibal's figure and of the lavish bedroom behind him. He needed to come so badly that his brain was giving up on him.

Hannibal's lips moved away from Will's cunt to suck a bruise on the tanned expanse of his inner left thigh, and Will pulled on Hannibal's hair with the last remains of strength he still managed to muster.

Hannibal's sole finger was coming in and out of Will's cunt as he sucked the bruise.

Will had been so on edge all this time that he was already dangerously close to coming. He pulled on the alpha's hair once again, with more impetus than ever.

Hannibal growled against the skin of Will's thigh like an instigated pitbull, but he was merciful enough to add two more fingers into him.

As Hannibal's three fingers reached Will's cervix, the tip of his cut fingernails tickling the osteo of his uterus perfectly right, Will orgasmed. It wasn't as satisfying as a knot would've been, but Will hadn't had an orgasm in so long that just plain water would already feed his starving self, akin to a desert flower, yearning for nourishment for years on end. The silvery bright lights returned to his eyes and he felt his debile body convulse desperately as if it had been struck by an electric current.

Hannibal didn't stop plummeting his fingers, a deliciously wet drag from all the slick Will was producing, which was sending Will to the pearly gates. Will felt his lashes flutter with the need to try and stay awake, but the orgasm waves were still hitting him like a calm tide on a summer day, the seafoam washing over him unhurriedly and deliberately, covering his feverish body with cold relief.

Hannibal moved his mouth from Will's thigh back to his clitoris and gave it a few thorough licks while his fingers continued their coming-and-going moves.

Will managed to open his eyes just enough to gauge Hannibal's expression. In lieu of the doctor, there was a dark-bodied creature, with protruding antlers and ribs, its eyes completely hot white, as he ate Will out. Its antlers branched out from its head so dramatically that they occupied most of the hotel room. They looked heavy to sustain, almost as if the weight of possessing such darkness was the creature's personal curse. The ripe grapefruit was stinking up Will's sensitive omega nostrils. He was, inevitably, oscillating between madness and sanity, he figured.

The thought that his heat could last as long as when he had to be hospitalized echoed in his head and filled him with dread and fear. But there was barely any room for worry when his psychiatrist's tongue and fingers were so dexterously magical.

Will came again. This time, it was too much. His clitoris started to sting with hurt, and he was already anticipating that the bruise on his thigh would be grape purple in the morning.

"Hannibal, I— stop."

The alpha did as Will asked. He moistened Will's wet cunt once more, a thorough flick of the tongue, before he pulled away. When he did, he cleaned his three slicked-up fingers on Will's heaving abdomen.

The sheets under Will's body were completely soaked with slick and the room smelled of a mix of Hannibal's old whiskey and grapefruit paired with Will's heliotrope and pineapple. The scent was tangy, both sweet and sour, and it lulled Will into an instinctive sleep, despite his trembling body.

Will drifted off easily, feeling guarded by the creature and by Hannibal's careful watch. He had little recollection of the alpha cleaning his body with a wet flannel—his sweaty forehead and limbs, and even between his legs, glued with slick. Will felt at peace for the first time in forever.

At least, until his next wave hit.

Will woke up to freshly changed sheets, which smelled like lavender softener. Once again, Hannibal was nowhere to be seen. Another scent caught his nose and he turned his head to its source.

On the nightstand, there was a full tray of breakfast, with matcha, croissants, jelly, goat butter, fruits, and a bowl of potato and ham soup, which had become Will's new favorite dish since Hannibal served it to him. The smoky ham was permeating the air deliciously and Will's starving stomach rumbled in response.

There was a little penned note on the tray, which read:

Dear Will,
I ought to be back before you wake.
Eat.
Drink.

But it was unfathomable to consider how badly he needed to eat and drink when his cunt had already started to tingle and to gush out slick, wetting the clean sheets. Will's head was spinning, the kaleidoscope of colors reappearing.

Orgasm.

Cock.

Knot.

Will shoved a croissant and some fruits in his mouth, chewing on it quickly, and downed it with the matcha. It hurt his esophagus with how much he swallowed at once, but he was only doing what needed to be done before he slipped. He drank the soup straight from the bowl, the silver spoon completely ignored, and hummed appreciatively as the little bits of chewy ham flooded his taste buds. It wasn't as good as Hannibal's soup, however.

Only then did Will realize he was wearing clean underwear. He looked down at it to find it was a white lacy piece, too, something he certainly had never owned in his entire life. Oddly enough, Will felt taken care of.

Knowing that it would only be a matter of time until his heat fully hit was making his breastbone burn with panic. Ignoring those thoughts, he swiftly found himself pulling his underwear to the side and rubbing his swollen clitoris on the pillow as he rode it. The pillow was now ensnared by expected dampness, each droplet of slick that gushed out of Will's cunt serving as a testament to his inner turmoil. The soft silk of the pillow clung desperately to itself, forlorn and misshapen. A heavy, sodden mass, in a slick-logged state.

"Nnnh. Alpha," Will cried out.

Will felt his cunt be breached by something bulky. When he opened his eyes, he found Hannibal sitting at the edge of the bed while he shoved the ferrule of his cane into Will's cunt. The expanse of the bulgy rubber was brutal and it *hurt*.

"More," Will begged anyway.

Hannibal forced more of the cane inside and Will opened his legs even further to receive it. It didn't take long for the ferrule to hit his cervix. Will thought of how lucky he was to have Hannibal's cane up his cunt, the alpha's steadfast anchor to the world. Will had never seen Hannibal use it and he wondered if it was only for in-bedroom activities, but his mind acrobatics still jumped to Hannibal taking secure steps with a firm grip against the capriciousness of treacherous grounds.

Will was the luckiest omega alive. It was basking in this thought that made him come for the first time today. He still continued to ride the pillow, eager to hit a second orgasm as Hannibal plummeted the cane in and out of him.

Will looked over his shoulder to find an enormous bulge in the alpha's pants. He could've been wrong, but he swore he saw Hannibal slightly blush, just a faint roseate tint taking over his tall, razor-edged cheekbones.

"You can fuck me," Will declared. He knew it sounded like begging and that breeding wasn't the best idea, as Will wasn't on birth control, but he couldn't find it himself to be bothered.

He needed cock. And he needed it now.

"I'd never do such a thing while you're unable," Hannibal said as he started to pull the cane out of Will. "While your judgment is this cloudy."

Will held on to the length of the cane, signaling that he wanted it inside for a while longer.

"Fuck off. You do all this, you— you distance me from my job, my dogs, my friends, you induce my heat by taking away my suppressants and putting me under insane stress— and you're still so cowardly that you can't even fuck an omega who's literally begging to be fucked," Will blurted out as he shoved another croissant in his mouth and chewed on it swiftly.

Hannibal chuckled. He pressed the cane even further in Will's cunt.

"Oh, long-tailed cat. You wear your convictions like a scarlet letter."

Will growled in anger as he reached another orgasm.

"It arouses me immensely," Hannibal said after a beat.

Hannibal stood up from the bed, removed the cane from inside Will in a single move, and shoved the rubber into Will's mouth.

"Suck," he ordered.

A part of Will felt so humiliated that it made his stomach flip with embarrassment, but most of him was avidly hungry to obey an alpha. Not an ordinary alpha, but the alpha who was taking care of him and making sure he wouldn't succumb to indignity like he had all the previous times he was in heat.

The antlers were back, adorning Hannibal's dark blond hair with extravagance. Will was still riding the wet pillow, chasing a third orgasm.

It was when Hannibal gagged him with the ferrule and induced his gag reflex that Will orgasmed for the third time. He moaned and whined around the cane as his hips moved erratically, riding the wave of his orgasm like a saddle on a wild sorrel.

Hannibal removed the cane and forcefully made Will sit up so he could take the lukewarm tea to his dry lips.

Will drank from it enthusiastically, only then realizing how thirsty he was and how his throat was burning with dryness.

He fell asleep again, completely sated, with a subtle smile plastered on his tired face.

———•~❊✧❊~•———

Will woke up two days later, completely dressed up in brand new silk pajamas and tucked into the hotel bed. His eyes scanned the room as he adjusted to what happened during the last two days. He spent his heat with his psychiatrist, rode pillows in front of him, obeyed him like a bonded omega, sucked on his cane.

He came for him several times.

Will shifted in bed only to find Hannibal was lying beside him, carding his fingers through Will's hair. Will's eyes zeroed in on the alpha's bare chest, which was thick with silvery hair. The walls of Will's cunt pulsed only once.

But Will noticed he no longer felt feverish and that it was the first time that a heat had lasted only two days, which was, obviously, thanks to the presence of an alpha throughout it. Will made himself small and hugged his knees, as he felt cold from the wind current coming from the ajar window—another indication he was, indeed, out of heat.

“I thought you might enjoy dining out tonight,” Hannibal husked out.

“Sounds good,” Will agreed, his voice an octave lower from lack of use.

Hannibal helped Will stand up, as he was still dizzy from the remains of his heat, and proceeded to dress him up. He had bought a brown velvet blazer and a burgundy sweater to go underneath. For the bottom bit, a pair of tailored pants and Italian loafers.

As Hannibal slid the pants up Will’s legs, he rubbed his cheek on Will’s thigh and inhaled the scent of his cunt, still a bit wet against another piece of brand new, lacy purple underwear. Will let him.

They went out for dinner in complete, total, sepulchral silence. Their hands never even brushed against each other.

Under Your Thumb

Chapter Summary

It's me! Again!

Thank you to Nion for looking through this chapter for me.

I hope you guys like this one! Yay.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Will stepped out to the busy streets, he was still unsteady and lightheaded. He made a mental note of how Baltimore's architecture was a mix between baroque and beaux-arts—refined amidst the neon lights, so very different from the simple and bucolic atmosphere of Wolf Trap.

Will thought of his dogs, the amenable temperature of the pond, his warm bed, and his chest ached. As if on cue, Hannibal's hand guided Will by the small of his back. Even though there were two layers of thick fabric between their skins, it still burned, as Hannibal's body was always as scorching as a melting cauldron.

"Where— where are we going?" Will asked as he felt his head spin just slightly.

"Thai restaurant," was the only bit of information Hannibal provided.

"I don't have much money."

Hannibal chuckled and paid Will no mind as he opened the door to his white Bentley for him.

Will got in and he was happy for the safety the car transmitted. Sunk in the leather seat, he felt as if he had been engulfed by a huge baseball mitt. Comfortable.

Hannibal got in the driver's seat and started the engine. Will found himself hypnotized by the doctor's hands and at the way they maneuvered the steering wheel—so smoothly, like a swan on the water.

Will figured he should feel angry, but the only feelings nestled in his chest were serenity and stillness, the product of having spent his first heat with an alpha. A competent one, too. But Will still wished he had been given a knot.

Hannibal stopped at the traffic light and landed his hand on Will's thigh.

Will stilled.

The alpha squeezed the meat of Will's thigh and rubbed it a few times as he hummed along to the classical music on the radio.

Will drooled from how relaxed he was. He quickly wiped the corner of his mouth with his thumb.

"Do you happen to have the borborygmi?" Hannibal asked, not bothering to hide a satisfied smile.

"I… I do, yes."

"Excellent."

When they arrived at the restaurant and walked into it, Will realized his cunt and thighs were stinging. Reruns of him taking the cane and of Hannibal's mouth sucking bruises on his skin took his mind. He blushed as the hair on his nape bristled.

They sat at a charming, private boutique in the back. Apparently, Hannibal knew the owner, which was why they managed to book a reservation on such short notice.

"We're having the cha plu leaves with toasted coconut for appetizers, the Massaman lamb curry for our main course, and the mango sticky rice for dessert, please," Hannibal instructed the waitress. "To drink, the seasonal tea. Thank you."

The woman took notes on her tablet and left.

Will noticed that Hannibal hadn't even needed to consult the menu. It was discarded to the side.

"I don't know what half of those things are. You didn't let me choose," said Will.

"Have you been here before?"

"I haven't. Obviously."

"And are you fond of my culinary endeavors?"

"I am. Of course."

"It's settled, then. You should feast and be satisfied with what I've ordered for you."

Will blushed again. He hated it, but he hated even more that Hannibal talked to him as if he were… an omega. Eventually, everything would come down to this, to how embarrassed this made Will feel, like he couldn't stand up for himself. He remembered the incident. And his mother.

"My mom would be very disappointed in me if she knew that I'm allowing an alpha to treat me this way," he muttered, more to himself than to Hannibal.

Hannibal's left eyebrow arched almost imperceptibly before he said, "That you're allowing him to protect you during your heat? Suspending medication that harms your omega biology? Ordering food he knows you'll enjoy and bankrolling all of your expenses? That does sound terribly awful, long-tailed cat."

Will's jaw was slack. He tried finding words to retort, but none left his mouth.

"Now, how are you feeling?" Hannibal asked as he extended his hand to touch Will's.

Will didn't move away, but he didn't soften under the touch either.

"Tired. And hungry. But fine, otherwise."

"What's troubling you, then?"

"I… can't believe the heat only lasted two days. This had never happened to me before."

"You had never spent it in the company of someone else, had you?"

Will shook his head. "Only with a beta once. He was my boyfriend for many years, but I was never… um."

"Sated," Hannibal completed easily.

Will nodded. "I truly liked him, but we weren't physically compatible."

Hannibal hummed as he caressed Will's inner wrist with his thumb.

"What about you and I? How would you rate our dynamic? Are we… compatible?" he savored the word on his tongue like it sizzled.

"No," Will answered without thinking twice. "And… yes."

"Elaborate."

"You cross my boundaries. And make decisions regarding my life without my permission. You can be inconsiderate to the point where you're a fucking brute sometimes. There's this pretentiousness about you that I loathe. It's ridiculous."

Hannibal was grinning. "But?" he asked.

"You see me for who I am. Our conversations flow easily. You're clever and a good listener. I admire your academic accomplishments, but also your personal ones. I think your love for life is inspiring, and that your hedonism is admirable. You smell so nice. And you're strong enough, both mentally and physically, to…" Will swallowed dryly before he continued, "to protect someone like me."

"Mmm. Is that all there is? That doesn't sound like much," Hannibal teased.

“I also… like the red glow in your eyes. And the way your hair cascades down your forehead. I appreciate the way you dressed down for me when I asked, even though I’m aware personal style is a big deal to you. Making concessions for people we care about is an important parameter to me.”

“I had yet to know you lodged any sweetness behind those icy eyes.”

“Well. Yeah. Sometimes.”

“I’m also quite fond of you.”

“No shit.”

“Lips of a belle, words of a sailor,” Hannibal shook his head in faux disapproval.

They were interrupted by the waitress, who served them the appetizers and some cardamom tea. Only then did Will realize he and Hannibal were still holding hands. Will untangled them swiftly and wrapped his hands around the teacup.

It was warm, but not comforting like Hannibal’s hand. Will remembered Hannibal saying, “The hand is the visible part of the brain.” His was full of affection for Will, if Will were to go by the gentleness with which he held it.

Will inhaled the fragrance of the food, rich with coconut notes, and his stomach rumbled in response.

“You’ve put on some healthy weight,” Hannibal pointed out. “Your cheeks have acquired a more roseate color, too,” he smiled fondly.

Will just shrugged. It was true, he did feel better in every way.

“Does it mean that I don’t have to take the suppressants anymore? Since they’re… yeah.”

“Placebos. No, you do not.”

Will hummed. “But I don’t want to have heats anymore. It’s too dangerous to be in that situation.”

Hannibal squinted so imperceptibly that, if Will was less trained on his microexpressions, he might’ve missed it.

“It’s not dangerous,” the alpha retorted, rather offendedly. “Not as long as I’m beside you.”

“What, are you like my boyfriend or something?” Will scoffed.

“Eat,” Hannibal growled.

Will rolled his eyes, but still looked for a fork and knife. He found only wooden chopsticks. He picked them up and tested them between his fingers. They felt foreign, and Will felt a bit

stupid at the way Hannibal's eyes were downing on him, like two red sunsets, waiting to see if he would be able to pick up the food on his own.

Will tried picking up one of the leaves as carefully as possible. When he closed the chopsticks around it, they flew to the floor.

The waitress promptly came to pick them up and to hand Will new ones.

Hannibal brushed her off, saying it wouldn't be necessary. The woman looked confused, but accepted it and left.

As if the leaf was made of crystal, Hannibal picked it up with his own chopsticks and fed it to Will.

Will knew his cheeks were red from the way his face was burning, but he still opened his mouth to receive the leaf. It was an explosion of flavors, the tanginess of the coconut sparkling on his tongue like fireworks.

He waited for more, and Hannibal obliged.

With his mouth full, Will said, "You should eat, too."

"I'll happily have the leftovers once you've had your fill."

"God, Hannibal. You don't have to act like this. Like you have to… I don't know, service me all the time. I'm an omega, not a king."

"Your obliviousness is rather endearing, long-tailed cat," Hannibal said as he fed Will another leaf.

Will ate in silence, accepting Hannibal's feeding as he had sips of the lukewarm cardamom tea in between.

Soon enough, the appetizers were finished and they were onto the main course, which was lamb curry.

"I've been thinking about your ham and potato soup," Will confessed.

"Mm? What of it?"

"Best meat I've ever had. This lamb is no match for it, no matter how fancy it is."

"Oh, you must try my hare terrine one day."

"Hare?" Will's face wrinkled up in disgust. "I've never had hare before."

"Gamey meat tastes like no other. I'll make sure to prepare it for you once we're back to Wolf Trap."

"We?"

“I’ll chauffeur you from today onwards. No more opportunities for migraines.”

“Hannibal—”

“Allow me to look after what’s mine.”

That shut Will up simply because he found no words for a reply. His efforts to fight against Hannibal’s advances were dying down, and the more they did, the more Will realized there was no reason for them to exist in the first place.

They finished the lamb and the mango rice. Hannibal paid for it, and left a hefty tip.

———•~❊✣❊~•———

Hannibal drove Will back to Wolf Trap, where his dogs and Beverly were waiting for him. Will had fallen asleep on the way back, but he quickly woke when he heard his dogs yelping at the car’s arrival. His heart was filled with love and joy immediately.

Beverly was the only one out of all of them, human or dog, with a scowl on her face. She knew Will would have to be away from work for health reasons and that he had had his heat, but not that Hannibal had been the one responsible for inducing it—or even worse, that he had also been the one to help Will through it.

“Did you guys come all the way from Baltimore?“ she asked rather suspiciously. “It’s a long ride, even with a car this good,” she vaguely gestured to Hannibal’s white Bentley. After a beat, she asked, “Where the hell is your car, Will?“

Only then did Will realize that his car was, indeed, missing. Usually, his blue pickup truck would be parked in front of the house. Instead, only his dogs were there, looking as confused as he was.

“Hannibal, where is my car?” Will parroted Beverly’s line rather dumbfoundedly, even though he could already guess the answer.

Hannibal smiled before he answered, “You will not need it anymore.”

Hannibal treating Will like that in private was one thing, but it was another one entirely to do it in front of his best friend. Will felt exposed, in a way he hadn’t allowed.

Will opened his mouth to reply, but nothing came out. He wanted to say that he deserved to make his own decisions, but how could he do such a thing when delegating them to Hannibal felt so good? He felt dirty and immoral.

He felt like an omega.

“Permit not that worry dims the luster of your pretty face,” said Hannibal as he pressed his ever warm hand in the small of Will’s back. And then, he whispered in his ear, “*I promise to take good care of you*.”

Will's legs turned into jelly as Hannibal's syrupy voice buzzed through his spine.

Beverly watched them amusedly before she spoke up. “Why don’t you guys come inside? I’ve bought ginger ale, and there’s an apple pie coming out of the oven.”

Will smiled. “I’m glad someone has finally put my kitchen to use,” he laughed.

Hannibal’s plump lips hardened into a straight line. “You and I will have plenty of time to christen your kitchen, Will. I have yet to prepare you the hare,” he reminded him.

Will deliberately ignored him as he and Beverly made their way into the kitchen. Will was hyper-aware of Hannibal’s presence hot on his heels, the ripe grapefruit scent accompanying him like a ghostly trail.

Beverly and Will bounced off some recent cases, and Beverly told him that the Bureau had made a significant break in the Olivia Johnson case, but that she couldn’t break the NDA and have Hannibal know about it, too. She promised to call Will later, which he anticipated greatly.

The two of them ate the pie and drank the soda. Hannibal didn’t eat because he was judicious about what he ingested and was sure to never harm his body with added sugars or excess sodium. Instead, he settled for watching Will closely and tumbling his long fingers on the counter.

Will didn’t mind it. He felt looked after. Besides, if he ever choked on the pie, it would be nice to have a doctor nearby.

He knew Beverly was staring, though, and that she had, more than likely, noticed the shift in the dynamic between them.

When they finished most of the pie and fed the dogs, Hannibal and Beverly bid Will goodbye —she, with a kiss to Will’s temple. Hannibal, with a subtle squeeze to his hip. The latter made Will tingle.

Exactly thirty-four minutes after Beverly left, Will’s phone, which was scorching hot despite the cold weather, buzzed with a text.

Bevelicious *You totally fucked your psychiatrist. And he might be a serial killer.*

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think!

Asleep Among Citrus

Chapter Summary

> I think this is the longest chapter yet? Thanks to Mark for the beta reading and lovely comments.

“Shh, my darling.”

Will heard his mom’s voice cooing at him.

Her omega body was warm and cozy and, as Will found himself nestled against the gentle curve of her breast, he could listen to her quickfire heartbeat—a symptom that she was aware of her impending doom.

Will gazed up at her, his eyes wide with wonder, and felt his heart ache with helplessness. His instincts were telling him his mom would be taken away from him. And there was nothing he could do to stop it. The candle of comfort was burning at both ends and its light would be extinguished soon.

So, Will closed his eyes and went back to drinking from her. The milk was sweet and, with each slow suckle, he tasted her nourishment and kindness. He was trying his best to memorize as much of her as possible. Huge eyes, round like two blue moons, and a crooked smile. Will’s immature eyes couldn’t grasp much more than this.

When he blinked back to the present, he wasn’t surprised to see he was on Hannibal’s ottoman, and that the lights of the office had been dimmed.

“How are you feeling, Will?” the alpha’s voice slowly rescued him from his reverie.

“Flirting with death. Like I need to pick my own tired self up.”

“Mmm. What else?”

“I keep thinking of the ebbs and flows of milk. My desperate suckles… their sounds suturing the silence. My mom urging me to calm down because she wouldn’t go anywhere. But she did.”

“What would you say to your younger self? Is there something you believe you owe him?”

Will’s eyes were only half open and still zeroed in on a spot on the ceiling when he answered, “I’d tell him… to feast while he can. Because the hunger that succeeds his childhood is everlasting. And I’d tell him to bask in the light while it’s still burning. Because the darkness that later accompanies him is murky and blinding.”

“Are you in the dark as we speak, Will?” Hannibal asked, his voice laced with sweetness.

Will turned his neck to look at the doctor. The man was in a cream-colored sweater and leather loafers, his suits and Italian shoes long gone whenever he had an appointment with Will. Will inhaled the smell of grapefruit and old whiskey, and the hairs on his nape bristled immediately.

“I am not,” he said.

“Where are you, then? Can you pinpoint it?”

“At your orchard. There are cut flowers everywhere, swatches of green fields expanding over the horizon, the smell of earth damp with rain. My skin. My body. My wrists tied above my head.” He licked his lips. Opened his mouth. Closed it. His heart was rapid fire, just like his mother’s.

Hannibal’s red eyes were like two headlights cutting through a foggy evening.

Then, Will added, “You are there. And God is, too.”

Hannibal delicately closed the notebook he was taking notes in and stood up. He strode across the office towards Will and offered him a hand.

Will took it and managed to sit up. He was dizzy from the smell of lavender coming from the oil diffuser, and from the implications of Beverly’s text. He still hadn’t gotten back to her and it had been thirteen hours since then. But it was so difficult to focus when his biology craved being close to Hannibal, orbiting him like his own satellite.

Will already knew Hannibal liked the same wine as Olivia Johnson, and that he had a knack for sadism. But considering he was a serial killer was far-fetched and ludicrous. Hannibal was a respectable doctor, a well-poised man, a fierce lover and, most of all, someone who could speak Will’s language after years of Will dealing with soul illiterates.

After Will recovered from his regression session, he rubbed his eyes, got up, and bid Hannibal goodbye.

Hannibal didn’t move from his chair. He had a vampiric grin on when he said, “Have you got your car, Will?”

He drove Will back to Wolf Trap.

The two of them sat together in Will’s kitchen.

“You should move to Baltimore. It’d be more convenient for you in every aspect,” Hannibal said after he and Will had the stuffed mushrooms Hannibal cooked.

Will huffed amusedly. “Have you seen how much housing costs there these days?”

Hannibal raised his left eyebrow. His lips curled upwards just slightly.

“No way. Hell no. I’m not moving in with my psychiatrist.”

Hannibal smelled his rosé and drank more from his glass, as if he was giving Will time to realize his stupidity.

Will gazed at him and his first thought was that he stood out like a sore thumb in such a humble kitchen. Hannibal’s expensive sweater, a stark contrast against the old wood of the table they had eaten on, like a well-worn leather saddle. Will no longer felt embarrassed about it. Instead, he felt as if Hannibal complimented his humility with grace and excitement.

“I’d assume you’d know better than to say we’re solely practitioner and recipient of care,” Hannibal said once he put his glass down.

“Listen…” Will sighed. “You get in my head. And confuse me. I think I need to rest. You were right, maybe I *should* be off work right now. I’ve been on the brink of exhaustion.”

“I see. You’re welcome to join me back in Baltimore for a better bed and finer food than...” Hannibal’s eyes wandered to the shelves. “Artisanal pickles and peanut butter.”

Will smiled. He couldn’t believe Hannibal was offering to drive him back to Baltimore when they had arrived at Wolf Trap no longer than a few hours ago.

———•~❊✧❊~•———

Will showered in Hannibal’s bathroom and, as he was getting ready for bed in one of Hannibal’s button-downs, his phone rang.

“Hello?”

“Finally! I’ve been texting you all day,” Beverly said, annoyed.

“Sorry, sorry. I’ve been trying to be away from my phone now that I’m off work.”

“Right. Well, do you have some time to talk about the elephant in the room?”

Will played dumb. “Which would be?”

“Dr. Lecter?”

“I know,” Will let out a faux sigh. “I know he was looking at me weirdly.”

“Well, did you two do it?” Beverly pressed.

“No, we didn’t.”

“Will.”

“I mean… yes, we did. Kind of.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“He just… you know, he used his mouth. On me. And objects. He didn’t knot me, if that’s what you’re asking.”

“Oh, God.”

“Yeah, it’s humiliating. But it gets worse than that.”

“How is that even possible?”

“I… begged.”

“You begged?”

“For him.”

“Oh, God,” Beverly repeated herself. Will could imagine she had her face in her hand from second-hand embarrassment. “Will, you have to take a look at Zeller’s report. It’s fishy.”

“Why?” panic rose in Will’s voice to the point where it cracked.

“Dr. Lecter was filmed buying wine on the same day Olivia Johnson went missing. It took us a few weeks to retrieve the tapes because they were corrupted, but we did it. He bought the same bottle she did. And he was right behind her in line.”

“So what? Can’t psychiatrists go wine shopping?”

“He should’ve mentioned something, Will. Why wouldn’t he unless he wanted to hide it?”

“I don’t know, Bev. I’m just his patient. I’m not that familiar with his activities outside the office.”

“Well, clearly, you *are* quite familiar. But you can’t do anything while being away from work. Can I come over so we can talk about this?”

Will panicked. “I’m not home right now.” He hated that he had just given himself away because it was past midnight. Where else could he be?

“I can’t believe you’re at his house! Will, what the hell!”

Will could feel his face grow hot with embarrassment.

And then, Beverly said, “Can you snoop? You know, before we interrogate him.”

Will looked around Hannibal’s bedroom and realized he was in his marrow. He was inside the spider’s den. Hannibal had trusted Will with it. He could get away with snooping.

“I can,” he replied in an unintentional whisper.

“Put your phone away, Will,” said Hannibal as he entered the bedroom.

He was clad in a robe, crafted from smooth, lustrous satin fabric in a deep shade of moss green. It was the first time Will was seeing the alpha's calves, which were thick and strong.

Will hung up on Beverly and put his scorching hot phone on the nightstand. He noticed Hannibal had two, a smartphone and a flip one, and the latter looked like an outdated Nokia. Will wondered if one was for personal affairs and the other was only for patients. He wondered, too, which one Hannibal talked to him on.

He adjusted the hem of Hannibal's shirt on himself and got in bed. The sheets were extremely soft, evidently Egyptian cotton, and the bed was humongous. Will remembered when Hannibal told him he had had omega partners before and that was how he knew omega skin pruned up easily.

"How many omegas have slept in this bed?" Will asked before he could think twice.

"None," Hannibal answered easily as he removed his robe and got in bed next to Will.

"None?" Will parroted as his eyes wandered around Hannibal's coarse, gray chest hair.

"All of my partners have slept in the guest room."

Will felt a chill run through his spine.

"Why?" he mustered enough tenacity to ask.

"Because I'd never seen any of them as equals. And because my muzzle is sensitive and can only endure certain scents. I could never sleep with it buried in honey."

Honey. Hannibal's previous partners smelled like honey, Will made a mental note.

"What do I smell like to you?"

Hannibal smiled, genuinely smiled, as if he had been anticipating this question. Will hated the smug look on the alpha's face.

"Powdery," Hannibal answered. "Like vanilla and almonds."

"It's heliotrope," Will mumbled as he averted his eyes.

"I figured, long-tailed cat. The flower of devotion… despite its toxic alkaloids."

Will said nothing.

"It's past our bedtime," Hannibal urged.

He reached for the nightstand and turned off the lampshade. Then, he cozied himself among the several pillows.

Will wondered if those pillows were new, because they did *smell* new, and he speculated that Hannibal might've bought them specially for tonight. Because Will was an omega and

everyone knew omegas felt more at home in nests than otherwise. It was just another dance of courtship between them, Will swiftly realized.

He got cozy, too, on his side of the bed.

Hannibal and Will never touched each other. Instead, they were at arm's length from the other, and Will couldn't tell if he loathed or appreciated it.

Either way, he drifted off easily as he hugged three huge pillows, drunk with ripe grapefruit.

Will had an odd dream. There were remaining fragments crowding his mind when he woke, but no solid recollections. Something about Hannibal kissing his forehead was the only image that came to him. The rest was completely blurred.

His arm hurt. When he checked it, he found a light pink bruise within the innermost curve of his arm. He remembered this had happened before, and his first guess was bedbugs.

"Hannibal–" he rolled in bed to tell the alpha about it, but his spot was empty and his side of the bed had been thoroughly made.

Will made a quick decision to go through Hannibal's vintage phone, as his more modern one was no longer on the nightstand. He did so very silently, without getting out of bed, only rolling to Hannibal's side, as he knew Hannibal's keen alpha ears would catch the slightest noise Will made.

The screen asked for a password.

As he wondered what kind of password Hannibal would use, a more obvious guess made itself known in his head. Will typed in 'sassicaia' and was let in.

There was barely anything on screen, except for a single red folder titled 'WFG,' which Will clicked on.

He should've been surprised when the folder opened a perfect and updated mirror of Will's very own phone, but he wasn't. It explained why Will's phone was constantly scorching—because it was being tracked. He saw Hannibal had access to everything, from texts and browser navigation to Will's pornography folder.

Will found no anger in himself. No disappointment. Only the placid feeling of being looked after.

He heard shuffling downstairs and put the phone back. His hands were clammy and he felt like a kid eating candy before lunch, hiding from his daddy like a bad boy.

Only then did he realize the air smelled of sizzled meat, something like pork, but not quite.

When Will got up from the bed, his knees faltered and he nearly fell. He felt dizzy for reasons unknown to him—nervousness, he guessed. The room was spinning. Another particular smell

permeated Will's nostrils, overcoming the meat. It had a sense of urgency, and it reminded Will of iron with a slight saline undertone. He couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from, but it was making his muzzle itch.

"Will," Hannibal's voice made its way into the spacious bedroom.

Will was afraid of turning around to face him and falling, so he just stood as still as possible.

"I've cooked for you," Hannibal growled as if he was mad at himself for seeing Will so weak.

Suddenly exhausted, Will slouched back in bed.

Hannibal mumbled something along the lines of being right back, and retreated to the kitchen.

Will focused on the mark on his arm as the world returned to its axis.

Not even a whole minute later, Hannibal came back with a silver tray containing Will's breakfast. He also brought a perfectly folded wet flannel and a basin of cold water for Will's feet. Will watched it all with wide eyes and unfocused vision.

Hannibal fed Will potato and ham soup and made him have black tea, granola parfait and a decently sized meat quiche. Will accepted it all willingly as he constantly opened his jaw for more as soon as the fork was empty. He hadn't realized how hungry he was or how much he appreciated Hannibal's servicing.

Whenever Hannibal took the fork to Will's dry, starving mouth, his hand always lingered a fraction of a second longer as he cradled his jaw just lightly enough to leave a burning feeling behind. Hannibal had his plump lips tugging upwards into a subtle smile and his eyebrows were gently arched.

"What?" Will asked, mouthful of meat.

"When the devotion is immaculate, the devotee heaves a heavy sigh, Will."

Will felt heat stir beneath his breastbone and an electric current ran through his limp spine. He wanted to say that flowery confessions wouldn't get Hannibal very far, but Will *was* in the alpha's bed, so he said nothing.

His eyes wandered to the corner of the room, where the cane was resting in its stand. Reruns of his heat hit him in balmy waves, but he felt no shame.

"Are you feeling nostalgic for what we endured together?" Hannibal asked as he dabbed the napkin on Will's mouth.

Will knew Hannibal words were supposed to cause an itch of discomfort, but all they felt was benign.

"Not nostalgic. Reflexive. I saw a side of you I hadn't seen until then."

“And what’s that side like?”

“Mmm. I don’t know. You’re always upfront, but you were… mean this time around. And sadistic.”

“How so?” “You stuck a cane up my cunt, Hannibal. And in my mouth. Something that… touches the dirty floor. That’s insane.”

Hannibal brought the teacup to Will’s lips and silently told him to sip from it. He said, “I beg to differ. It did the job, didn’t it?”

“I’m not so sure. Buy me a dildo next time.”

Hannibal’s eyebrows perked up. “Nothing of that sort will ever penetrate you.”

Will let out an annoyed huff. “I’m going back to sleep,” he said as he tucked himself back into bed.

Hannibal put the water basin aside and placed the wet flannel on Will’s forehead. His fingers caressed Will’s cheek and jaw angle before he let go.

To Will’s surprise, Hannibal got rid of his robe and got in bed with him. Will allowed it, both because he was too tired to question why Hannibal was going back to sleep at midday, and because he enjoyed the idea.

“Will you allow me?” Hannibal asked as he held the hem of Will’s shirt, not quite clear about what he meant.

Will’s heart picked up again. He was always overly nervous around Hannibal. Nonetheless, he mumbled a “yes” to whatever it was.

Hannibal’s warm hands found their way under Will’s shirt and began to massage his tense muscles. He started with the knots on Will’s shoulders, tight from working at his desk for too long and from worrying. He followed the path down Will’s vertebrae, which were protruding less sharply since he had regained weight. Hannibal’s strokes were light and gentle, as if he wanted to heat up the muscles before actually untangling them.

Will let out a satisfied moan as he melted under the alpha’s hands like butter on a hot knife.

As if he sensed just what Will needed, Hannibal increased the pressure in his fingertips, especially his strong thumbs, to knead the skin. He used long and sweeping motions to cover the expanse of Will’s back.

“Good?” he asked in a husk.

“Yeah. Yeah, good,” Will agreed. He was so relaxed even his jaw was slack, which made it hard to speak.

Hannibal’s movements were symbiotic with Will’s needs, as he constantly anticipated where Will wanted to be touched. Will wondered if that was because they had spent his heat

together or simply because Hannibal was that good of an alpha.

Utter relief was the only thing on Will's mind—Beverly's request and the mark on his arm both long gone.

"Hannibal…" he mumbled.

"Yes?"

"Hold me," Will whispered as his eyes closed slowly.

But that wasn't what Hannibal did. Instead, his hands reached over to touch Will's nipples. The tip of his pointer fingers circled Will's soft nubs and Will let out a muffled gasp out of surprise.

"Good?" Hannibal parroted his own question.

"I'm… yeah."

Hannibal removed his hands, which caused Will momentary panic, but they were back a few moments later, Hannibal's fingers now wet with alpha spit.

Will's nipples were now hard enough to poke through his shirt. And his cunt was beginning to produce slick. It was confusing for him because no one had ever touched him that way, and his breasts had always been a polemic matter to him. Getting pregnant and nursing were two things that had never been on his plans. Not after he had endured what it was like to grow up without parents.

"What's on your mind?" Hannibal used his alpha voice in Will's ear.

"Honestly? Not much."

"That's quite a rare occurrence."

Will huffed as he tried to hide a strained moan. "You act as if… you have the upper hand, but I know you've been dying to touch me this way."

"I have," Hannibal easily confessed. "But that's not a secret I've ever wished to keep. I've always kept my intentions crystal clear, long-tailed cat."

It took Will two seconds of extreme courage, but he encircled Hannibal's wrist and lowered it to in between his legs.

Hannibal wasted no time to caress Will's cunt over the fabric of the cotton underwear with his entire hand. Will let him. It was difficult to imagine the alpha's expressions, as Will had his back turned, but there was so much swimming in his mind, memories from their shared heat, that it was almost enough.

In a rush, Will's hand covered Hannibal's, a silent ask to rub him harder.

Hannibal fit his hard cock in the crook of Will's ass as he spooned him. He didn't let up as he rubbed Will's cunt in back and forth movements and he teethed at the skin of his neck.

Will opened his legs further to allow more of Hannibal's hand between them. He knew he was wetting Hannibal's pristine bed sheets with slick, but he couldn't bring himself to care. It was embarrassing, but he knew he could come just from this if he tried.

This was different, though. It wasn't having sex with his psychiatrist because he was in heat and could die if he didn't. No, this was conscious. Will was sober, out of heat, and had been the one to initiate it. The thought that Hannibal's cock was so close to breaching him, if not for the two layers of their clothes, was making Will's head spin.

"Hannibal– gonna–" Will mumbled with his eyes closed as he rode Hannibal's palm.

Hannibal removed his hands from Will altogether.

Will immediately withered like a flower in winter.

"Boys who snoop deserve no grace," Hannibal said, his voice an octave lower than usual.

He got up from bed and disappeared downstairs.

The smell of iron made a triumphant return.

Muscle to Muscle

Chapter Notes

> Hello, everyone. I hope you're all well! I particularly enjoyed writing this chapter and I hope you enjoy reading it. The songs I listened to while writing were White Leather by Wolf Alice and Slow Like Honey by Fiona Apple.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will woke up with weary eyes. He knew where he was, for the citrusy scent was everywhere, but he couldn't figure out why his limbs were sizzling with numbness or why the room was bleak. When he tried moving his arms, he realized his wrists had been cuffed to the bed. He tried to break free only to hear metal clatter against the headboard.

Hannibal had put him in handcuffs.

Will shouted the alpha's name and was surprised by the hoarseness of his own voice. How much time had passed since Hannibal had denied him? It seemed like hours if the weight in his arms was anything to go by.

He gave a startle when he felt a tourniquet being tied around his left arm, right above where his mark was. Next, he felt the warmth of the alpha's hands holding him tightly in place. Will didn't even try to fight it.

"What are you– what are you doing?"

A needle pricked his skin and Will caught the familiar smell of iron he had been feeling in his nostrils since the night before.

Realization hit him like a fist to the gut.

"You've been… drawing my blood. And bringing it here."

Hannibal chuckled in amusement.

"Since we met. Haven't you?" Will pushed.

He didn't get a reply from the alpha.

"But why?"

"At first, it was to check for STDs. When I realized I needed to wean you off your corticoids and birth control, it was to check your hormone levels. They were vertiginous, long-tailed cat. Undeniably vertiginous."

“But–” Will was dizzy and his sentence was brought to a halt. Due to the silvery spots blurring his vision, organizing his thoughts proved to be a daunting task. He couldn’t stop wondering how Hannibal was doing this in the dark.

“Every single time I woke up with a mark on my arm, I felt incredibly unwell,” Will concluded as quickly as he could, before he would drift into unconsciousness. “What’s the point of drawing so much blood?”

Hannibal hummed and planted a kiss to the inside of Will’s wrist. As Will heard the noises of several tubes being filled, he felt himself getting weaker and weaker.

“I’m solely looking out for you,” Hannibal replied. “But I also have needs that ought to be indulged. Urges that would be frowned upon. I enjoy seeing you struggle, dearest. It brings me great joy. Fulfillment, even.”

“Alpha, please,” Will tried to shake himself free before he was reminded of the handcuffs. “Your flare for violence scares me. Your *artfulness* scares me. Every inch of you is terrifying.”

Hannibal emitted a soft coo as he removed the needle and applied a small plaster to Will’s bleeding arm. He caressed it a few times before turning on the lampshade.

Will was shocked to see there were about thirty tubes filled with his blood.

Hannibal released him from the handcuffs and said, “Be good. I’ll be right back.”

Will wanted to say that he was incapable of moving with how lightheaded and confused he felt. But he couldn’t, so he curled into a ball and tried to zero his eyes in on a focus point in the bedroom. A lot of factors about this bothered him, but the most pressing of all was how wet he was inside his pants.

Hannibal came back a few minutes later with a gold tray.

He brought pan-seared liver, which had a distinct splash of balsamic vinegar. Will could also smell caramelized onions, mashed sweet potatoes, and steamed green beans. Hannibal was feeding him a generous amount of iron, Will instantly realized.

“I’ve also been giving you IV iron,” Hannibal explained. “And occasional transfusions when your hemoglobin is too low. I’d loathe you to be an anemic omega.”

“All this work just to make me helpless for a few hours?” Will mocked him with a whispered scoff, as his voice was still weak. “How pathetic.”

Hannibal growled. “Eat your liver.”

Will thought about what Hannibal had told him about Zang-Fu.

“What does the liver mean?” Will asked, his knees flush to his chest as he smelled the air around him. His stomach growled in response.

Hannibal forced Will to sit up. He answered, “When unbalanced, frustration.” He licked his lips and flattened the hairs on Will’s right eyebrow before he added, “And irritability.”

Will made a mental note—Hannibal had allowed him to witness the blood drawing solely as another demonstration of his power over him. To punish him for going through his phone. For wanting to come like a dog in heat. For connecting the dots.

“Hannibal.” Will’s tone was firm.

Hannibal looked up, completely unbothered. He lifted Will’s chin with two of his fingers, his touch so careful and gentle that Will barely registered it.

“There’s turmoil inside you,” Hannibal stated. He sounded so sure. “Why don’t you ask the question you’d like to ask?”

“You murdered Olivia Johnson. And removed her spleen. To convey some kind of sick message. You did. Didn’t you?”

Hannibal’s red eyes flickered with bloodlust.

“You were behind her in line. You corrupted the tapes. You stripped her from her clothes and dignity, and set her on fire,” Will pressed. “You did. Didn’t you?”

“She was a perverted young woman. She was greedy. Proud. Filthy. Adulterous. Her decaying memory would have provided her a peaceful death, to which she had never deserved.”

Will’s heart rate picked up. His throat closed. He thought he was going to pass out, but he was too alert to let it happen. A survival instinct overtook him, as did disbelief and denial. It was difficult to associate the ever well-polished Hannibal with such monstrous deeds. Will revisited all of their interactions as he searched for clues he might’ve missed. He had trusted Hannibal completely. Blindly.

As the truth penetrated his core like claws, Will experienced a profound sense of betrayal. He felt exposed and vulnerable. He felt *overpowered*. Will faced a difficult choice: to seek justice for the crimes Hannibal had committed, or to turn a blind eye and save himself from more anxiety and turmoil. He knew what it’d look like if he told everyone Hannibal was a murderer. They wouldn’t believe him. And, if they did, Will feared that he would lose his credibility as a profiler for having missed a killer right under his roof.

Will questioned his judgment and his instincts. He loathed himself for letting all of this happen. He loathed even more how allured he was by Hannibal’s darkness. It was glorious to think that the alpha had built himself an empire, something he could use to conceal his darkness and to bring the unworthy in like starved rats.

Will tried getting up from the bed, but his knees faltered.

Hannibal warmly said, “It’s quite alright, long-tailed cat. I’ll fetch you the wheelchair.”

Will found himself being fed bites of liver as tears streamed down his face like waterfalls. He felt foolish; moronic, even. He felt immoral and dirty for lusting after a murderer. The most terrifying aspect, however, was how safe he felt under Hannibal's careful touch despite it all. Now that Will knew what the bruise on his arm was from, he couldn't wait until it became purple and blue so he could press it over and over again. Hannibal was right, there *was* turmoil inside him. And it was eating him alive.

The liver tasted incredible on Will's hungry tongue. The tanginess mixed with the caramelized onions in unison, and Will couldn't recall ever being so hungry in his life.

"I can see the wheels turning," Hannibal said.

Only then did Will notice his knitted eyebrows and the pucker of his liver-stained lips.

"It's nothing new," he whispered, his eyes fixed in a trance. "You confuse me. That's all."

"Care to elaborate?" Hannibal asked as he wiped the corners of Will's mouth with a pristine linen napkin.

Will managed to muster enough energy to scoff. "This isn't therapy."

"I'm still your psychiatrist. My feelings for you will never get in the way of our therapeutic relationship."

Feelings.

Did Will also have feelings? If so, what nature did they possess? He settled for fear and disappointment.

When Hannibal finished feeding him, he picked Will up and carried him to the en-suite bathroom that was connected with the master bedroom. Ever so delicately, he placed Will's limp, tired body on the marble sink.

He said, "There's a new toothbrush and a clean towel I have set out for you. Can you clean yourself or do you require help?"

Will was aware that Hannibal *knew* he required help. Will just admitted it in a whisper.

"Very well," Hannibal mumbled, though he didn't sound boastful or particularly satisfied. His tone was sweet and it enveloped Will in a comfortable lull—the rumble of his alpha voice, the way the depth reverberated through his throat and out of his lips, it was all incredibly soothing to a touch-starved omega like Will.

Will was starting to notice that, whenever Hannibal stepped into a caregiver role, his scent was always stronger. Part of Will knew that it was because they were an alpha and omega pair, but he still hoped that this hadn't happened with Hannibal's previous omega partners.

“You smell so nice,” Will confessed with a tired exhale. “I almost forgive you for everything. But not quite.”

Hannibal huffed humorously. “Arms up.”

Will did as he was told. Hannibal removed Will’s T-shirt and tapped his left hip so that he would raise his lower half. Hannibal removed his shorts without much difficulty, as dexterous as he was.

When it came time to remove Will’s underwear, Will stopped Hannibal with steady hands on both of his wrists.

Hannibal raised a questioning eyebrow, something that probably said, ‘I’ve already seen all of you. This does not faze me. It never will.’

But Will knew this was different. That it wasn’t sexual. That it would be another move of Hannibal’s courtship. That being known, Will wasn’t sure that he wanted to give Hannibal that triumph. That kind of access.

“I can see how damp it is,” Hannibal referred to the cotton underwear. “I could smell you from across the kitchen. It’d be paramount to wash you.”

Will realized Hannibal was right. Besides, he didn’t want to get a rash or feel any dirtier than he already did. He wished he had the strength to undress himself, but he didn’t.

He just nodded slowly and averted his eyes.

Hannibal slid Will’s underwear down his thighs, knees, and ankles at a glacial pace. He folded the soaked fabric gently and set it on the sink.

Will didn’t know when Hannibal had set the bath to run, but he was grateful for the warm water, loosening his sinews in seconds. Will let out a satisfied moan as he sank into the bath and tipped his head over the edge of the tub.

From the tub, Will could see a fraction of the several books inside of the room next door. He didn’t know if it was a study or a library in and of itself, but the view was astonishing. Many shelves possessing titles of every nature decorated the room beautifully.

As Hannibal washed his hair and massaged his scalp, Will’s eyelashes fluttered as he fought the urge to fall asleep.

He yawned. “You should read me something…”

Hannibal turned on the shower head and rinsed Will’s curls gingerly. He didn’t reply.

“Can you stand up for a second?” he then asked as he offered Will a hand.

Will took the alpha’s hand and obliged. He should’ve felt embarrassed when Hannibal proceeded to wash his hairy armpits, his inner thighs adorned with stretch marks, and his soft

abdomen, but he didn't. Hannibal was barely looking at Will's body; it seemed he was only looking at the bare minimum so he knew where to touch.

"Would you like to wash your folds or should I?" Hannibal offered.

"No, I– you can do it. It's fine. It's… nothing new. Right?"

Hannibal nodded. The only sound audible was the gentle fall of the water as Hannibal rinsed Will's body with the shower head.

"Then, if it's up to me, I'd like to shave you as well. If you agree to it."

Will had never shaved his pubic hair before, he had only trimmed it his whole life. He didn't see it as a problem, as something to be hidden or scrutinized. But, when Hannibal put it this way, Will knew it was because the alpha was a slave for aesthetics. He also knew that, if Hannibal could tailor Will to his needs as if he were his very own sculpture, he would.

"Okay," Will agreed easily.

Hannibal grabbed a brand-new razor, a can of shaving cream, and some scissors.

Hannibal patted his own shoulder and told Will to level his leg. There was no room to hide, Will noticed. He still smelled strongly down there, and he knew Hannibal enjoyed it, if he were to go off of his flared nostrils and blown pupils. Hannibal was a gentleman, though, and would never say anything about it.

There they were, Will's semitendinosus to Hannibal's deltoid. Muscle to muscle.

Hannibal began trimming Will's pubes first, as they were too long to be shaved.

"I feel tired," Will confessed.

"You can lean on me."

Will used Hannibal's strong shoulders as leverage. At this point, Hannibal was supporting Will's entire body weight.

Hannibal applied the cream to Will's vulva and began shaving him. The blade glided smoothly over the surface of Will's sensitive skin, with just the right amount of pressure to remove the hair without causing any discomfort. Each stroke followed the contours of Will's folds and ensured a clean, close shave. After each stroke, Hannibal would rinse the razor to maintain a clean process.

Will was surprised to see his mount pubis, how prominent and soft the flesh was down there. He didn't know that he looked like this. He had no clue that something as ordinary as shaving could make him feel desirable and seen.

"How does it feel?" Hannibal checked with Will in between strokes.

"Fine. I… didn't know what it would be like, but it feels good."

Hannibal finished the job, always mindful of Will's labia, and gave Will one final rinse. He planted a kiss on Will's ankle and let him sink down into the tub water once more.

"Just a second," he said before he left the room.

Will took advantage of his alone time to close his eyes and bask in the feeling of the warm water hitting his now shaved vulva. He took his hand to it, only to memorize how it felt. He rubbed the pad of his pointer finger up and down his clit and then experimentally slid it inside for just a few seconds. As he fingered himself mindlessly, he wondered what Hannibal was up to. It wasn't difficult to picture Hannibal's dirty cane instead of Will's own insufficient, thin finger.

Will removed his finger and allowed the slick that dripped out to flush down the drain.

It was just on time before Hannibal came back. He had changed into a dry, violet button-down, holding a thick book in his hands.

Will's stomach did somersaults.

Hannibal pulled out a small wooden bench from under the sink and sat next to the tub. Without ever sparing Will a glance, he opened the book. It read, 'The Thorn Birds.' The alpha cleared his throat before he began reading.

"There is a legend about a bird which sings just once in its life, more sweetly than any other creature on the face of the earth. From the moment it leaves the nest, it searches for a thorn tree, and does not rest until it has found one."

Will smiled. He hadn't guessed that he would enjoy Hannibal reading to him so much.

Hannibal acknowledged Will's smile with a flutter of his eyes before he continued. *"Then, singing among the savage branches, it impales itself upon the longest, sharpest spine. And, dying, it rises above its own agony to outcarol the lark and the nightingale."*

Will's smile dissolved, though his fascination remained. He loved Hannibal's voice, but it was his darkness that compelled him at this moment—his determination to murder someone who was undeserving of living, the dark romance books on his shelves, the urge to own Will and to do anything he saw fit with him. Will could almost see a black fog surrounding Hannibal's aura, a constant reminder that what lived inside of him was cruel and relentless.

Will felt lured by it like a moth to flame.

"One superlative song, existence the price," Hannibal continued. *"But the whole world stills to listen, and God in His heaven smiles. For the best is only bought at the cost of great pain. Or so says the legend."*

Will yawned and lay his head on his folded arms. He said, "I think you wouldn't be very happy with what's going through my head right now."

"Hm? And what would that be?" Hannibal indulged Will, albeit nonchalantly.

“I’m not… *brave* enough to say it. But I could show you.”

Hannibal’s expression perked up. He closed the book and put it aside.

Will decided he was going to go through with his idea. He could only hope that Hannibal would see the genius in him.

He got up from the tub and did his best to dry himself with the huge Egyptian cotton towel Hannibal had provided for him. He didn’t dry his cunt.

Then, he sat on Hannibal’s right knee. His bony kneecap touched Will’s clit deliciously. Will was already dripping slick from his mindless fingering earlier, but he believed Hannibal would enjoy it rather than scold him for it.

Will laced his arms around Hannibal’s head. Hannibal’s eyes were as dark as tar and his jaw was locked in place. He held Will’s hips with both hands.

Will immediately shivered at the thermal shock of Hannibal’s hot hands on his drying skin.

“What is it you’ve envisioned, long-tailed cat?” Hannibal pressed. “Tell me.”

Will smiled. He began to ride Hannibal’s knee as he teethed on the skin of the alpha’s neck. He was so ridiculously aroused from not having any pubic hair, by Hannibal’s violence and his need to serve, and by the fact that Hannibal was completely dressed whilst he was naked. It was a stupefied fusion of thought that went straight to Will’s cunt.

“Will. I’d rather us not engage in such activities when you’re feeling weak,” said Hannibal.

Will remembered his heat, when Hannibal had denied him and had used his cane instead. It had hurt, both physically and emotionally, to think that Will was undeserving of the alpha’s knot. But Will wouldn’t cry or beg for it.

Instead, he got up from Hannibal’s warm lap, bundled himself in the heavy towel, and left the bathroom, albeit dizzy and walking in zig-zags—the embarrassing vision of it all didn’t matter, as long as his pride remained untouched.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know your thoughts! Much love.

Two Hundred Eighty-Two

Chapter Notes

> Thank you for nearly 800 kudos and for the lovely comments. I can't begin to say how much they encourage me to finish this story. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Let me know what you think.

Will didn’t know how long it had been since he had entered Hannibal’s house. The whole hazy atmosphere and the intoxicating smell made him unable to tell time. He figured that having been drugged several times certainly didn’t help his case. He also noticed something else—his phone was missing. In its stead, there was a brand new flip phone, which had no functions except making and receiving calls.

Most of Will felt violated and infantilized. On the other hand, he would no longer have to dodge Beverly’s calls or be constantly checking his texts for work updates. Being away from work and his phone brought him an immense sense of peace and positive detachment.

Will shifted in bed so he was staring at Hannibal. It wasn’t surprising to find out the alpha had his eyes peeled and zeroed in on Will.

There was a question Will was dying to ask, no matter how wary he was.

“Have you killed other people before?” left his hoarse throat before he could think twice.

Hannibal smiled just slightly, his pointy fangs peeking out from his upper lip.

Will trembled. He couldn’t pinpoint the nature of it.

“Do I frighten you?” Hannibal asked.

“No. Even though I fear for my safety, most of me would like to understand you better. Why you did what you did. You said Olivia Johnson was proud and adulterous. Is that your criteria?”

Hannibal hummed in acknowledgment, but didn’t offer a satisfying reply. Instead, he reached out to remove Will’s curls from his sweaty forehead.

“You have tendrils of midnight for hair locks,” he mumbled mindlessly.

“Hannibal. You were sloppy. You let them have access to the tapes. Why?”

The fangs came into view completely. Hannibal looked to be enjoying himself. He said, “Oh, dearest. How else would you believe the shadow that accompanies me?”

Will felt trapped. He felt like he was in his first appointment with Hannibal, all that time ago, and that he was always two steps behind. Hannibal constantly crafted an illusion of choice and free will when, in reality, he had everything planned to the very last detail.

Will's mouth went dry. He was glad he was lying down. Hannibal's fingers were still toying with his curls leisurely. Will had goosebumps going down his naked spine from the gentleness of the caress.

"You often play around with my questions and seldom answer them." Will knew he sounded annoyed and mean, but he had to try and be firm to get his answers.

"Two hundred eighty-two."

"What?"

"Olivia Johnson was number two hundred eighty-two."

Will's vision shifted slightly out of focus. He had goosebumps going down his naked spine, but his heart didn't quicken. It was as if the ground had crumbled underneath him. His thoughts were loud and violent like a stampede in a canyon. He rubbed his hands together and noticed they weren't clammy at all.

The tingling feeling began to fade and only the touch of Hannibal's dexterous hand on his forehead remained. He got an instantaneous influx of everything Hannibal had ever told him.

'The more I know you, the more you look like a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs.'

'I was the nearest person to offer you relief.'

'It might even fortify our bond.'

'A good meal, rich in protein and fat, keeps one satiated for long.'

Hannibal's touch was the only thing keeping Will grounded. He looked into his Japanese maple eyes, drowning in all that redness, and felt as if he was staring into the abyss. A bottomless cliff. Hannibal's eyes were overflowing with pride. Time and space were stretching along the horizon of Will's mind.

"You're safe with me," Hannibal assured him. "You shall always be my number one priority. Do you see what I desperately needed you to see?"

Will knew Hannibal meant 'the shadow' he had mentioned, but Will saw nothing but light. He saw a man with nimble hands and an architectural brain. He saw truth, boldness, and sophistication. He focused on his caress again. It felt incredibly soothing.

"I see you," Will opted to say. He closed his eyes.

"Tired?"

“No, I… just need time to process.”

Will looked down at his arm to find a huge bruise nestled in its curve. He felt owned. It was sick, wrong, and should’ve been frowned upon, but Will had never felt as safe with anyone as he felt with Hannibal. He wondered if that had anything to do with the hormone weaning.

“Did you only trigger my heat to have me your way?” Will asked.

Hannibal chuckled. “If I wished to have you my way, there would be a great chance you wouldn’t survive your heat. I could’ve taken you to the brink. Left you there. I opted not to do so. I simply offered you enough relief to make it through alive.”

“But you knew we would bond even further after spending my heat together. You did that on purpose.”

“Of course. Every detail I’ve arranged was engineered to bring you to me, Will. Do you still doubt my devotion to you?”

Will huffed. “You barely know me.”

Hannibal sighed. “I know you starve yourself because you believe you do not deserve nourishment. You see your dogs as family and, besides Miss Katz, they’re the only ones you’ve got. You possess a knack for fishing, and you thoroughly enjoy sandwiches, summer suns, and stargazing. Your favorite foods are artisanal pickles and peanut butter… and, most recently, ham and potato soup.”

Will gave Hannibal the courtesy of a subtle smile.

“You drink,” Hannibal continued. “A lot. More than most people. And you have nightmares of your deceased parents weekly. I also learned, from mirroring your phone, that you check your card balance before you make any purchases. Even if it’s a loaf of bread.”

Will’s cheeks went red. He felt better for knowing that Hannibal knew certain things he would never have the courage to verbalize to him. The paucity from his childhood still served as a present ghost, and Will knew he would forever be afraid of starving to death. His eyes watered just slightly, but not enough for tears to fall.

“It’s quite alright,” Hannibal cooed. “I admire all of you. Even your foul mouth and inconvenient attitude.”

As he barked out a laugh, Will scooted even closer to Hannibal, desperate for the warmth of his torso. And of his soul.

“And you happen to be the owner of my favorite scent,” Hannibal continued. “Ripe pineapples. Red berries. And heliotrope.” Hannibal let out a humorous ‘hmph’ before he continued. “A cat who’s surrounded by heliotrope and still persists on life. How wondrous, how brave.”

Will’s smile turned into a full-fledged grin.

Hannibal seemed to be basking in Will's joy because he didn't stop talking.

"*What a piece of work is a man. How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving, how express and admirable. In action, how like an angel. In apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals."*

"I can't believe you just quoted Hamlet to me. Very contrived of you."

Before the alpha could craft one of his mysterious replies, Will's stomach growled.

"Fancy an English breakfast, long-tailed cat?"

"I still find it foreign when you call me that."

"Oh, but that's precisely what you are. Though, recently, your tail has become more and more still. You've grown more aware of the rocking chairs. They rarely outsmart you now."

Will yawned. "Go get me that breakfast."

Will had poached eggs, bacon and sausages, fried bread, and grilled tomatoes until he could no longer breathe. His diaphragm was being pressed by the enormous weight of his stomach. He couldn't help it when Hannibal's culinary mastery were so above average. And the way he prepared his meat—God, Hannibal's meat cuts were the best Will had ever tasted.

Will thought of the life he was beginning to spurn. He thought of his mundane job and hackneyed routine, two things he would be willing to trade to experience more lively situations and better cooking. Then, he thought of his dogs, especially sweet Ellie and naive Buster, who were more dependent on Will than the others. He also thought of his late mom, and imagined which opinions she would have regarding the choices Will had been making.

He was staying at a serial killer's house. Will felt like a river with burst banks after torrential rain. Ruined to the point of no return, dirt and debris everywhere. He was too in deep now, he figured.

"Will?"

Hannibal's velvety voice snapped Will out of his reveries.

Will met Hannibal's red eyes.

"You're not going to kill me. You aren't. Are you?" Will asked, though he wasn't actually worried. "I'm here… in your den. I'm a fly trapped in your vicious web. Such easy prey. Deliberate prey. Weak prey."

Hannibal's expression was unreadable. He strode towards Will in nimble steps and cradled his jaw.

"Do you judge me for a fool, Will?" asked Hannibal as he stared deeply into Will's eyes.

“No. Is that a rhetorical question or are you actually worried about my perception of you? Would me judging you as a fool harm your ego?”

Hannibal’s lips twitched into what could’ve been a smile.

Will said, “You don’t scare me. I believe you do things because you’re broken inside. You’re rotten.” He took a deep breath and held back from his disdain. As an afterthought, he added, “Rotten like me.”

The alpha’s smile finally widened. His satisfied look made Will’s stomach churn with anxiety. It also made his cunt wet and his heart rate skyrocket.

“Oh, long-tailed cat. If you and I are both rotten as you reckon, I’m a corpse emanating the stench of decay, whilst you’re solely a fruit that underwent the misfortune of falling from its tall tree. You’re a little forgotten fig, Will. That’s all. A little defenseless stem of inflorescence, while I am death itself.”

Will scoffed. More often than not, Hannibal constantly reminded him of his omega status. Will wasn’t ready to admit that he actually enjoyed the feeling.

“You. Do not. Scare me,” Will repeated himself. “*You* should be scared of how empty you are. Of the bleak void behind your eyes.”

“Dearest…” Hannibal began. “Be rational for a change. How could I possibly be void when holding you?”

Heat pooled in the pit of Will’s stomach. He ignored it and said, “I need to go home. I’ve been here too long.”

“Nonsense. I’m well aware you enjoy Baltimore best. You have a home here, Will. You needn’t to worry about anything. Not about your expenses, nor cooking. You can rest and indulge yourself as much as you’d like.”

“Why are you treating me like this? It doesn’t make sense to me. You’re rich. You’re obviously on the run from the police. You have nothing to gain from courting me if not a headache.”

Hannibal tucked one of Will’s rebel curls behind his ear. His grapefruit scent was incredibly tangy. Will inhaled his space unconsciously.

“I’m fond of you,” the alpha said gently. “I wanted you to see me for who I am. My darkness. My resourcefulness. How I’m able to provide for someone like you. To keep you grounded and joyful.”

Will sighed tiredly. “I’m going upstairs for a nap. We can figure out what to do later.”

He disappeared up the steep spiral stairway before Hannibal could say anything else.

Will dreamed of the deer again. This time around, it was eating soft mast from Will's hand. Its tongue and muzzle were wet and tickling Will's palm. Will would've chuckled if he wasn't so hypnotized by the exchange.

The air around him smelled of fresh blood and bleach. So much bleach that it was making him dizzy. The quixotism of the scene brought confusion. There was a mellifluous voice calling out for Will.

He opened his tired eyes. All this sleeping on and off had him feeling lost. He was happy to dawdle and rest, but it'd be easier if his thoughts weren't eating him like hungry worms.

"You've been asleep for too long. You ought to eat," said Hannibal.

"I want my dogs."

"They're safe with Miss Katz."

"No. I want them here with me. In Baltimore. That's my condition."

"Your condition?"

"To stay here. And to put up with your wrongdoings. I don't agree with your habits. I think you're stupid, unconcerned, and vile. But you take good care of me." Will took a deep breath and exhaled. "I want my dogs," he repeated.

Hannibal nodded slowly as he placed Will's breakfast on the nightstand. It smelled like orange juice, eggs, and fried bacon.

"That will not be a problem," he said. "All of them?"

"All of them. You certainly must have a backyard, right? With a house this big, I mean. And how highfalutin you are."

The alpha's eyes glimmered with humor. "I do, yes."

"Very well. I want them here tomorrow. Or I'm leaving and telling the Bureau everything."

"Oh, dearest. You're blind if you think anyone would believe you. Especially not after you've been so unstable to the point of needing to be away from work. What I've built here, every brick, it all has its paramount importance. You're stuck with me, long-tailed cat. Whether it's your desire or not."

Will bit off some of the bacon and downed it with the juice. He saw the point in Hannibal's reasoning.

"Tomorrow," he reinforced it.

"Tomorrow it is," Hannibal agreed before he cleaned the corner of Will's greasy mouth with a pristine linen napkin. "What would you like to do today?"

“Want to stay inside.”

“You need some sunlight. You’ve grown pale since you’ve left Wolf Trap. I cannot let your health decrease.”

“Well, my shoulders hurt. I just wanna be in bed.” Will yawned.

Hannibal got up and walked toward the bathroom.

Will waited for him to return as he ate more of his bacon and eggs. The bacon was just the right amount of crisp and chewy, and Will made a mental note to ask Hannibal where he bought his meat from. It was always lusciously mouthwatering.

Hannibal reappeared with a bottle of jojoba oil in his hand and with his sleeves rolled up to his forearms.

“Would you be kind enough and remove your shirt?” he asked.

Will ignored the butterflies doing somersaults in his stomach and stripped off his top.

Hannibal told him to lie down and Will obliged. This had happened before. And Hannibal had denied Will. And made him eat the organ of irritability.

In no time, the alpha’s strong hands were untangling the knots in Will’s tense muscles. Will swore to himself that he wouldn’t make it sexual, which proved to be an arduous task, considering how wonderful Hannibal smelled and how adroit his hands were, always applying the right amount of pressure.

Will focused on the feeling. He *wouldn’t* make it sexual. Not after Hannibal had denied him three times. One during his heat, limiting himself to fucking Will with a cane, two when he found out about Will going through his phone, and three, after the blood drawing. Will would behave, no matter how long he had gone without a knot.

“Your scent is delicious,” Hannibal rumbled. “I could bury myself in the crook of your neck.”

Will realized that, the more the alpha dug his fingers into his skin, the more pheromones Will produced. He thought it was still an effect of how they had bonded over heat, and over all those therapy sessions.

“You can,” Will replied. “Bury yourself in my neck, that is.”

It didn’t take much longer than three seconds for Will to feel Hannibal’s heavy body drape on top of his naked back. He felt Hannibal’s nose rub up and down the side of his neck. Their bodies were only separated by a thick layer of jojoba oil and the thin fabric of Hannibal’s button-down.

“We’ve been doing it for a while,” the alpha whispered in his ear.

“Hm?”

“Love. *Sex*. Through telepathy. My mind and yours, connected by a string of libertine thoughts. But yours has always run faster than mine. You’re a filthy little cat.”

Will didn’t deny. He had been obsessing over Hannibal’s knot for a while.

“You’re the doctor. When is my next heat due?” Will asked with the side of his face squished between the pillow and Hannibal’s keen nose.

“What use would that be in providing you with this information?”

“So I can prepare. I have to go shopping for provisions. Water gallons, my pickles… there’s always so much to do before a heat.”

Hannibal huffed. “You have me this time around, Will. When I promised you’d never have to worry, I meant it. I’m your lifelong provider.”

Up this close, Hannibal’s ripe grapefruit was stronger than ever. Will let himself bask in the smell and in the comfortable weight of the alpha’s body on top of his. But there was something very particular that shifted his attention.

Hannibal’s hardening cock against the curve of his ass.

Will would *not* make this sexual.

“Your mind is running quickfire as we speak,” said the alpha. “Wanton, depraved thoughts, but you’re frightened of being denied once more. You’re overloaded. Candy-coated. Am I wrong, Will?”

“I won’t let you have the upper hand in this. You control me enough,” Will retorted, even though he was fine with the idea. He shifted under Hannibal so he would get the clue and move.

He did. Hannibal set Will free and sat next to him in the huge bed.

“As you wish. You’re going outside today, though.”

Will would do his best to fight against leaving the house.

———•~❁✧❁~•———

Will and Hannibal were sitting on a bench at Hillside Park. Hannibal was, surprisingly, wearing a merino wool sweater, his suits forgotten in the back of his wardrobe now that Will was spending all his time with him.

Hannibal had brought a picnic blanket and packed two slices of meat pie for the two of them, along with a bottle of Lafite Rothschild.

“That’s a new label,” Will referred to the wine bottle. “Have you had a change of palate?”

Hannibal shook his head. “I’m merely a man who goes through phases of fleeting obsessions.”

Will’s heart stung. “Is a fleeting obsession what I am to you?”

“I find sanctity in your eyes, silly cat.” He motioned to feed Will a bite of pie.

“Stop calling me that.” Will let out the meanest growl an omega could.

“Don’t you like it?”

“No.”

“It stays.”

It didn’t surprise Will at all when Hannibal fished inside his picnic basket for a tube of sunscreen. He spurted some on two of his fingers and proceeded to coat Will’s face with it. First, his nose and cheeks, followed by his forehead and chin.

Albeit embarrassed, Will let him.

Next, Hannibal fit a cap snugly on Will’s head. It read, ‘If you ain’t a fisherman, you ain’t shit’ and it made Will cackle.

“I thought you’d find it amusing,” Hannibal smiled. “I bought it for you.”

“I appreciate it. Have you looked into bringing my dogs?”

“I have. They will be here tomorrow, first thing in the morning.”

“Who’s picking them up? I can’t exactly do that since I no longer have my truck.”

“I’ve hired a moving truck for them.”

Will was in disbelief. “I forget you’re ridiculously rich.”

“What’s the use of money if one cannot spoil his loved one? It’s not an issue, Will.”

———•~❊✣❊~•———

The next day, Will welcomed a huge moving truck. He released all of his furry companions in Hannibal’s wide backyard. Buster and Ellie were the first to greet Will as they licked his palm with their wet muzzles—much like the deer.

Hannibal watched from afar, composed as ever, as he obviously fought a smile.

Will glanced at him and Hannibal’s smile bloomed. Will knew the alpha wouldn’t appreciate the muddy paws on his marble floor and having to pay for dog shampoo. But Will didn’t mind putting him to the test. In fact, he thought he deserved much worse.

Will took a few pictures of his dogs with his outdated new phone and was surprisingly pleased by the results.

“Are there any other conditions, *kitty cat*?” Hannibal asked as he approached Will and the dogs and set his hand on Will’s nape.

Will thought this pet name was even more humiliating. He cringed internally, even though his cheeks felt warm from it.

“Oh, not for the time being,” he assured. “But don’t worry. I’m sure I’ll find something eventually.”

Hannibal chuckled fondly as he gave a gentle squeeze to the muscles in Will’s neck.

Governing Conception

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It started with the tonic phase.

A sudden muscle stiffness followed by loss of consciousness.

Will felt as if he was being sucked into a black hole. His surroundings were embalmed in a fuzzy haze, and his body had become rigid, frozen in place by some kind of foreign force. Will's muscles were pulling and tensing against each other with an unyielding grip. Every sinew felt locked in place, resisting any attempt to relax. The stiffness intensified and spread through his arms and legs like a creeping vine. Will's back arched unnaturally as his muscles contracted with ferocious strength.

His body transitioned into the clonic phase. There was a moment of stillness, as if his limbs were catching their breath after the intense rigidity. Then, almost imperceptibly at first, his muscles started to twitch. Small jerks that rippled through his body like little electric currents.

The twitches escalated into more pronounced movements. Will's arms and legs were flailing about, as if being pulled by invisible puppet strings. The jerking motions were relentless and becoming more and more violent by the second. Will's chest was heaving from how rapid his breathing had become, and his features were contorted with each spasm.

Slowly but surely, Will regained his consciousness. His first instinct was to call for Hannibal. Will was too exhausted to move, so he lay still, completely spent from the ordeal. He felt fatigued and disoriented as he looked around for the alpha.

Hannibal was there, right beside Will, speaking in tongues, his words far away. His voice echoed in Will's ears distantly. The alpha's strong hands were holding Will tightly in place. Will figured it was so he wouldn't hurt himself further.

Will's eyes rolled to the back of his head as he tried to ground himself. The only sensations he could grasp were the overwhelming warmth of Hannibal's hands and the cold, hard marble floor he was resting his head on. There was a contrast in temperature that made Will feel shivery and feverish.

Feverish.

And that's precisely what it was. Will had a fever. Or that's what he could gather from what Hannibal was saying—chants of 'this is perfectly normal for an omega in distress like yourself,' 'you mustn't leave me' and 'you ought to be just fine' flooded Will's ears.

The next thing Will noticed was that he had cold compresses under his armpits and between his thighs. He tried to get rid of them, but his arms wouldn't obey. A needle pricked Will's muscle, and he thought it might've been something for the fever.

“Shh,” Hannibal cooed. “I’ve given you an antipyretic, that’s all.”

“Am I in heat again?” were the first words that Will could find strength to speak.

“You would’ve been if I hadn’t reduced your fever, but you must understand that it’s not time yet.”

“Not– not time?” Will asked as the room spun around its axis.

“You and I must still get acquainted with each other. You’re only starting to let me in. We need to be on the same wavelength when it’s finally time.”

“Hannibal, please,” Will pleaded. “Just give me the pills.”

“You don't know what you’re talking about. You don’t mean that.”

“Hannibal…” Will trailed off, still exhausted.

“You must trust me completely.”

The sentence made Will come back to himself almost immediately. He sat up slowly with a hand on his forehead. Everything hurt.

“What happened?”

“Febrile seizure. Shouldn’t repeat itself,” Hannibal supplied with confidence.

Will winced as his temples pulsed. He put the back of his palm on his forehead and felt the scorching heat. He wasn’t sure what a febrile seizure entailed, but he hated that Hannibal had the upper hand over such a serious matter.

“You can’t keep playing with my body like this,” he managed to say. “With my life like this. Something could’ve happened to me. I could’ve hit my head somewhere and died.”

“When I said I’d be here for you every step of the way, I meant it. Why do you persist in resisting me?”

Will debated it for a split second. The next thing he knew, he had his arms around Hannibal’s neck and his head on the alpha’s broad chest. The grapefruit scent was flooding Will’s nostrils in calming surges.

Hannibal accepted him and held his head.

“Your scent,” Will started.

“What about my scent?”

“It was the first thing I noticed about you… overripe grapefruit and old whiskey. It was as if I had been transported to an orchard. To my childhood. When my life was empty. The fruit was

right above my head, but so far away for a six-year old. With you here, the scarcity is over. The fruit is between my teeth."

"*Per aspera ad astra*, long-tailed cat," Hannibal whispered in his ear.

"I don't know what that means."

"You will. I'm Adam and you're my Eve. You're welcome to nest inside my ribs. I will not let you go. I will not let you suffer."

Will's eyes were fluttering closed as Hannibal caressed his curls.

"What a human thing to do," Will said. "To receive paradise as a godly gift and still wish for more."

Hannibal said nothing.

"Sometimes, I enjoy thinking I've already died. And that this is my umpteenth time here on Earth. I like the feeling that I might be experiencing things I have already experienced."

"Mmm. Could you provide an example?"

"My dogs," Will answered easily as he remembered where they were now, just outside in Hannibal's backyard, finally reunited. "It's as if I know them from other lives… but it's different with you."

"How so?"

Will blinked away the water in his eyes before he answered, "I'm meeting you for the first time. I feel like God wanted me to wait until I met you. He wanted to prepare my infertile heart, my cold soul… to receive someone as zealous and ardent as you. All of my past lives have led me to this."

"Is that positive or negative, long-tailed cat?"

Will chuckled, half a self-deprecating scoff. "I'm on your lap, am I not?"

"Great observation, Will." Hannibal planted a kiss on Will's head. "How are you feeling?"

A beat passed before Will answered, "Horny. Like I could bear a child."

He knew it was only the effect of his almost-heat, of being brought back to the ground by force, but he accepted the urge easily. It went against most of his plans for the future, but it was a nice perspective nonetheless.

"Not quite the time for that, is it?" said Hannibal, though there was no humor in the heightened cadence of voice.

"I guess not. It's a very strange feeling."

“I can only imagine how much.”

Hannibal told Will he would prepare dinner for the two of them, and for the dogs.

Will asked if he could help, but Hannibal said he would rather him just watch instead of getting his hands dirty. He had never let Will into the kitchen on his own, Will realized, or let him lift a knife or open the pantry door. Will didn’t even know what Hannibal kept in his refrigerator.

———•~❁✣❁~•———

Later, the dogs were having their dinner—rice, sweet potatoes, and pork—and Will and Hannibal were having kidneys à la Bordelaise with a bottle of Lafite Rothschild.

“Kidneys,” Will mused as he looked down at the elegant dish before him, decorated with fresh herbs. “What a peculiar choice.”

“They govern conception and birth, which is why they are called the root of life,” Hannibal explained.

“So, you won’t let me take suppressants because you still want me to have heats, but you don’t want me to have them right now because we have to ‘bond’ further,” Will made air quotes, “but I also can’t want to bear a pup without having you scrutinizing me and wanting me to ‘govern’ my omega instinct to reproduce.”

“I’m glad you have it all figured out,” Hannibal said as he fed Will a forkful of meat.

Will accepted it, though reluctantly.

“You treat me like I’m defenseless, harmless, or a lost cause. I’m not.”

Hannibal frowned. “I’ve never said such a thing. I’m aware of how strong, determined, and resilient you are. I solely want you to know there’s no need to put on a front all the time. You have me.”

Will sighed. “Can I call Bev? Or Jack? I’m lonely here.”

“You can. Tell them where you are.” Hannibal grinned.

“Why?”

“So they know not to look for you. They will be interrogating me tomorrow about Miss Johnson.”

“Oh, my God.” Will covered his eyes as if Hannibal’s words had physically hurt him.

“Not to worry. I’ll tell them half the truth. That I’m a regular at the wine shop. That I’m as shocked and horrified as anyone else. And that I’m willing to collaborate to find the real culprit, of course, as someone who would do such a thing needs to be brought to justice.”

“This is ridiculous. The worst part is that I’m sure it will work because of your… charm and eloquence.”

“Those traits *have* served me well so far. You’re right about that.”

Will ate more of his dish and sipped on the wine.

“Why do you do what you do? What’s in it for you?”

“It started with blood. They murdered my little sister. You wouldn’t understand.”

“I’m clearly trying to. I know very little about you, and you know everything about me.”

“I thought you said the other day that I didn’t know you at all?”

“I was wrong. Or in denial, who knows.” Will sighed. “I miss our sessions.”

“This can be arranged. I hadn’t realized you’d grown to enjoy therapy.”

“Yeah, well. I’ve changed a lot since we first met.”

The alpha nodded. “How’s your instinct for reproduction doing?”

“Contained.”

Hannibal poured more wine for the two of them.

“Where were you?”

“I was with you the entire night,” Hannibal assured as he entered the front door. “Left for grocery shopping after dawn.”

“No. No, you didn’t. I woke up at 3AM from a nightmare and you weren’t in bed. You weren’t anywhere in the house either. Where the hell were you?” Will asked, the sunlight shining on his worried face, as he stood up stiffly.

Will’s gaze fell upon Hannibal’s leather shoes, which were stained with dried blood. Will’s spine went cold.

“I can only imagine what kind of grocery shopping that entails.”

Hannibal’s eyes darkened with fury. “You accepted all of me. I’m kind enough to be giving you the courtesy of not doing it under your nose. I’m giving you time. What’s so surprising about blood droplets?”

“I don’t know! I can’t fathom that you hunt people for sport!”

“You said–”

“I know what I said, but seeing it is very different. How often do you do this?”

“Once every two weeks.”

Will got dizzy. He slid down the wall until he was on the floor.

“How do you choose them?”

“I’ve been going to winehouses lately. I pick the rudest ones, investigate them, and end them.”

“You… you buy their favorite wine. And you drink it religiously. Like it’s a trophy. What’s their name? The Rothschild victim.”

“Austin. Austin Montgomery. He used to run an orphanage in the country, but he abused both the farm animals and the children. Chestertown police had their eye on him for a while, but had no proof.”

“How do you even know that?”

“Several police stations around the country rely on my medical impressions. It isn’t difficult to gain access to their records.”

“Did you drive all the way to Chestertown?”

“I did.”

“Oh, my God.”

“Will, I must tell you about my childhood eventually–”

Will didn’t let Hannibal finish. He pulled him down by his sleeves so he would be on the floor too. Will lay his cheek on Hannibal’s palm. The stench of blood was back.

“You have to understand that this will be difficult for me,” said Will. “I’ve gone against people like you my entire life. Not only for my job, but as my moral compass.” He sighed. “That’s not even what I’m angriest at,” he added as an afterthought as hints of amusement pulled on the corner of his lips.

“What is?” Hannibal asked, on the floor with Will.

“You’re wearing your suits again. And this… plastic thing on top.”

“I didn’t think I’d be seeing you so soon, long-tailed cat. I thought I’d have time to change into a more casual piece before you woke.”

Will noticed something he hadn’t until then—an icebox in Hannibal’s left hand.

“What have you gotten there?”

“Food.”

“Mmm. I’m hungry.”

“Good. I’ll make you that ham and potato soup before I have to leave to be interrogated.”

Will felt his mouth water as he nodded. “What about the hare?”

“When it’s time, dearest. When it’s time.”

———•~❊✣❊~•———

Hours later, Hannibal told Will everyone at the Bureau had bought his version of the story and that he had been removed from the suspects list. Will was glad, very glad, but there was something else clouding his mind with worry. It seemed he couldn’t focus on legal matters, only on omega ones.

“Hannibal. I need to tell you something.”

“Go ahead.”

“It’s embarrassing.”

“I doubt it.”

“You can’t laugh. Can’t make fun of me.”

”I would never do such a thing.”

Will took a deep breath before he mumbled, “It’s about… my bodily fluids.”

Hannibal’s eyebrow shot up. “Are you hurt?”

“No. No, I– I’ve been getting really… oh, I don’t even know how to say it.” Will cringed at his own hesitation. “Getting really wet lately. For no reason. Out of nowhere.”

Hannibal’s shoulders relaxed. “That’s expected. We pushed your heat back. Your body is in limbo.”

“Does it mean I’ll be like this until my next heat?” Will sounded desperate.

The alpha nodded. “There are pads in the bathroom,” he supplied.

Will’s cheeks went hot. He had never worn a pad before. He wondered why Hannibal had pads in his bathroom in the first place—had he planned this?

“I can’t,” Will said. “That’s mortifying.”

Hannibal’s face twitched slightly. “Plenty of omegas wear pads, dearest. It’s only embarrassing if you believe it is. You ought to try and decide how you feel later.”

Will buried his face in his hands.

“Do you have any other… conditions on your end?” the alpha asked.

Will didn’t have any, but the permissibility in Hannibal’s voice enlightened him with an idea.

“My books. I want my books.”

“We have enough in the house. Enough so you’ll never be bored.”

“No, I want mine. Threadbare and full of post-its, my companions before you took over my life and started dictating what I can and can’t do,” Will phrased it negatively, his words sharp at Hannibal like a weapon, but it was for show.

“Consider it done.”

“My copy of ‘The Anatomy of Motive’ is in my drawer at work…” he wandered off, almost feeling a pang of longing for his job. “Don’t forget that one, please.”

“Very well.”

“I also want you to read to me more. I like how your voice sounds. And your literary choices.”

The alpha nodded. “We could have a reading session now. After you put on your pad, that is.”

Will grunted.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

Will was sitting on the couch, legs in criss-cross, as he listened to Hannibal read. He was, of course, wearing a pad. An overnight one too, because there was *too much* slick. If he didn’t think about it, it wasn’t as embarrassing. That way, he wouldn’t have to change underwear three times a day or wipe slick off his inner thighs whenever he stood up.

Hannibal was reading him more of ‘The Thorn Birds,’ as per Will’s request.

“The bird life was so rich and varied there seemed no end to new kinds, and they lived not in ones and twos, but in thousands upon thousands: tiny green-and-yellow parakeets Fee used to call lovebirds, but which the local called budgerigars; scarlet-and-blue smallish parrots called rosellas; big pale-gray parrots with brilliant purplish-pink breasts, underwings and heads, called galahs; and the great pure white birds with cheeky yellow combs called sulphur-crested cockatoos.”

Will smiled. He enjoyed the imagery and the plethora of colors Hannibal was painting. The smoothness of the alpha’s voice tingled his arms and legs pleasantly. The sensations of listening to Hannibal read and to have him as a masseuse were the same. Pure ecstasy and comfort.

“I think I’d like to have a sulphur-crested cockatoo the most. They sound absolutely magical, don’t they?” Will mused.

“I suppose.”

“Come on, don’t stop now.”

Hannibal continued, *“Exquisite, tiny finches whirred and wheeled, so did sparrows and starlings, and the strong brown kingfishers called kookaburras laughed and chuckled gleefully or dived for snakes, their favorite food. They were well-nigh human, all these birds, and completely without fear, sitting in hundreds in the trees, peering about with bright, intelligent eyes, screaming, talking, laughing, imitating anything that produced a sound.”*

“Ah, beautiful. In a grand design, aren’t they much like us?” Will asked, his head in the clouds.

“How so?”

“We all have this visceral need to be free. To fly through and navigate the wind. No matter our color or shape, the desire in our hearts is the same.”

Hannibal hummed as he quietly tumbled his fingers on the hard cover of the thick book.

“And what kind of bird are you?”

The question hit Will like a tree felled by an ax. Waves of all of his moments with Hannibal overtook him. Their first therapy session. All the courting advancements. Hannibal selling Will’s car and getting rid of his smartphone. The cane. Shaving. Blood drawing. Massages. Tender touches. Denial. Denial. Denial. Hannibal’s grapefruit and old whiskey scent. The vice-like grip of his protective hold. The deep redness of his infinite eyes.

Will inhaled the alpha’s space, something that was starting to become a habit. He closed his eyes softly as his body went lax. Then, just above a whisper, the words that rolled out of his tongue surprised him.

“I’m your cat,” he said.

Hannibal grinned. “What does that make me?”

Will half shrugged. “The little bird under my claws.”

“I see. How’s the pad, dearest?”

Will giggled. He threw a pillow at him.

They spent the rest of the evening reading and nibbling on green grapes until Will felt so sleepy that Hannibal had to carry him back to the master room.

———•~❋✧❋~•———

Will called Beverly the next day, with Hannibal in the room and the phone on speaker.

“Hello?”

“Bev. How are things?”

“Will! For fuck’s sake!”

Will felt bad, he did.

Beverly continued, “When a moving truck came to take your dogs away, my first thought was that you had died. I checked hospitals and morgues looking for you. Did you lose your phone?”

“No, this is my new number. I won’t always be available, though.”

Beverly sighed. She said, “Where have you been hiding? Is everything okay?”

Will spared a glance at Hannibal, who was standing in the corner of the room. The alpha was clad in a brown wool sweater and cream tailored pants. He was barefoot on the cold marble floor. Will’s subtle smile didn’t reach his eyes.

“I’m with Hannibal,” he confessed. “Everything is fine.”

“With Hannibal? In Baltimore?”

“Yes.”

“Jesus Christ, Will. Why?”

Will debated how to go about this. If he told her *any* of the truth, the police would be knocking on their door in a matter of minutes. Will made a stupid, albeit convenient decision.

“He’s my boyfriend now.”

“What do you mean by boyfriend?”

“I moved in with him.”

“What about your house in Wolf Trap?”

Hannibal nodded slowly, as if he was saying ‘Tell her we’ve got it covered,’ so she wouldn’t worry.

“We’ll figure it out later,” Will assured her.

Silence hung in the air for a few seconds before Beverly spoke again.

“If that’s how it is, I’m going to miss you. Can we go out sometime?”

Hannibal shook his head.

“I’ll try to find some time,” Will said. “I have to go, okay? I’ll talk to you later.” He hung up.

When he was off the phone, he realized he was sweating from nerves. He hadn't thought that the first step to detaching himself from his old life would sting so much.

"How are you feeling?" Hannibal asked.

Will hadn't even noticed that the alpha was now right by his side and that his warm hands were on his face.

"It's a lot," Will said. "It's a lot of changes in such a short time. I still want to be a teacher. I want the pond behind my house. I want to be able to read with my ankles in the water and the sun above my head… but I also want to feel your hands on me like this. To wake up beside you. And to try your hare."

Hannibal caressed Will's jaw with a soft cradle. "You can have all the other things you crave. Having me isn't exclusive. All I had were a few diminutive conditions to make sure I could keep you in line. Your car, your phone, the ills of your old life. I'd never keep you from your dreams."

Will sniffled quietly as he leaned into Hannibal's touch with yearning, but also so much sadness.

"I want a baby…" Will trailed off.

"This is your hormones speaking through you," Hannibal supplied. "We can always reassess the possibility when your judgment isn't so cloudy."

"Okay." Will exhaled.

Hannibal fed Will a fresh dish of kidneys. He mentioned something about 'keeping his blood above the belt' and 'cleansing his head.'

Will accepted it willingly—anything to keep him from feeling worse, he figured. He ate forkful after forkful and downed it with wine. He thought of Austin Montgomery, who he had never gotten to know, but that would become a permanent presence in the halls of his memory, much like Olivia Johnson.

Later, when he and Hannibal were coiled up on the couch, Will's eyes widened at what the news anchor said.

"Authorities have made a grim discovery today. Austin Montgomery, missing for five days, was found deceased in the outskirts of Chestertown, Maryland, where he grew up. Mr. Montgomery was sixty-two and ran an orphanage. He was found nailed to the doors of the orphanage, with his genitals mutilated and missing both of his kidneys."

Will and Hannibal both watched it in silence, Hannibal's hand encircled around Will's waist.

"Law enforcement officials are on the scene, launching an investigation into the circumstances surrounding this tragic event. Details are still emerging, and we urge viewers to exercise caution as the story develops. Our hearts go out to the family and loved ones affected by this unfortunate incident."

Will cozied up closer to Hannibal as a futile attempt to shield himself from the words on the screen.

Chapter End Notes

If you enjoyed it, consider leaving me a comment. It's been difficult writing with everything that's going on in my life, including really bad mental health, so every little comment, as simple as it is, makes a whole difference. All my love!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!